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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

DEMOCRACY HYPOCRISY

"Unless the Sandinistas sponsor free, democratic elections by [fill in date], we should resume military aid to the *contras*."

"So long as Fidel Castro declines to hold free and democratic elections, the United States should continue its longstanding blockade of the Cuban economy."

"Until the Soviet Union permits free and democratic elections in the satellite countries of Eastern Europe, we should not . . . etc., etc., etc."

Although we distrust such simplistic litmus tests, especially when they are unevenly and cynically applied, we are all for free, democratic elections. Imagine our consternation, then, when we read in *U.S. News & World Report* that the C.I.A.—under first Reagan and now Bush—has been funneling millions of dollars into Panama in an attempt to rig that country's upcoming elections against Bush's onetime buddy, Manuel Antonio Noriega, still wanted on drug-running charges in the United States.

Reagan's Administration did it indirectly through "psychological operations"—such as publishing opposition newsletters and setting up television transmitters to interrupt regularly scheduled programming with subversive broadcasts. Bush's Administration does it directly, if clandestinely, by giving money to support opposition candidates.

Maybe we're missing something, but if anyone knows how elections can be free and democratic while simultaneously being undermined by the C.I.A., please tell us. We *are* told that the agency intervenes in overseas elections only after the President makes an "intelligence finding." Well, we have our own intelligence, and it finds that a free and democratic election, at least in the Reagan-Bush mode, is spinach, and we say to hell with it.

ABORTION: MAJORITY REPORT
Elsa Dixler And Others

ASIAN LABOR
Denis MacShane

PRAGUE PROTEST
Herman Schwartz

INTEGRATION IN DEMOPOLIS
Ann Waldron

HERMAN AND CHOMSKY
Philip Green

BELLOW'S 'THEFT'
George Packer

NEITHER PINK NOR CUTE

PISTOLS FOR THE WOMEN OF AMERICA

LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN

While semiautomatic "assault" rifles have been commanding gory headlines, another weapon has been struggling to make its existence known to its target audience. Smith & Wesson's Lady-Smith .38-caliber revolver, designed for "the physiological requirements of women," appeared in stores last month, an attempt by the country's largest gun manufacturer to boost sagging sales by expanding its market. However, the company's preliminary promotional effort—a subtle and decorous safety campaign presumably designed for the psychological requirements of women—has met with an advertising blackout by several gun-shy national women's magazines.

The six full-page ads that triggered this fusillade of media rejections neither show nor mention firearms. Each looks like a public service message advising cautious behavior in a variety of risky situations: what to do when alone on the road with a disabled car, or how to check a car's back seat before entering, respond properly to suspicious sights and sounds in the house and discourage burglars when one's home is unoccupied. The tag line on the ads invites women to call a toll-free number "for more information on how to better protect yourself in and out of your home."

I called the "800" number and was greeted by "Diane."

"I'd like some more information," I said.

"About what?" replied Diane.

"Personal safety."

"We'll be glad to send you our safety brochure."

(*Continued on Page 666*)

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EXCHANGE.

Just Who Is This 'We'?

MAJORITY REPORT

New York City

Many on *The Nation*'s staff were appalled by Christopher Hitchens's attack on the women's movement and on the freedom of reproductive choice in his "Minority Report" of April 24. We do not all think alike about abortion, but almost all of us agree that the right to decide to bear a child belongs to the woman—not to the state or, as Christopher puts it, to society. And we believe that the defense of that right is not just a personal matter but a proper concern of the left.

Christopher's uneasiness about abortion seems the most genuine sentiment in his piece, and it is the position with which we can most easily sympathize. For many of us, abortion is a moral dilemma. I and some others on the staff see abortion as a hard choice, but one we would definitely make under certain circumstances. For others, the choice is not so hard. A third group says: I would not have an abortion (or encourage my partner to have one), but each woman must make this choice for herself.

Christopher's distaste for abortion and his ignorance about the women's movement is clear. But it is impossible to tell what his relationship is to what he has written. In his closing paragraphs, when he begins to suggest a policy on abortion, he abandons his own voice and begins to describe the "proposal" that society would make to women if society wanted to protect the "unborn" child. He further distances himself from the proposals he is outlining by having "society" (which does not seem to include women, since it is addressing them) speak as "we," in quotation marks.

When he has society say that "'we' do not like what 'we' hear about gender abortions," does he mean that he does not like what he hears or merely that some people do not like what they hear? This device allows him to drag in all sorts of right-wing propaganda (there is *no* evidence of gender abortion in the United States) without having to take responsibility for it. Unlike Christopher's usual clear and elegant prose, this column contains more voices than the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

The distancing strategy has another benefit. When readers accuse Christopher of advocating the criminalization of abortion, he will deny that he said anything of the kind—and he didn't. He has "society" say that "'we' want to define this as a social problem," and that "in return" women and children will receive the health benefits that most advanced societies routinely provide. This program seems intended to make it possible for women to avoid abortions. Christopher accuses feminists and their allies of not facing the reality that fetuses are human and alive, but he won't face the reality that the alternative to legal abortion is criminalization.

Christopher is also evasive in his discussion of the nature of reproduction. I agree with him that the fetus is a human life, and I understand that he is truly troubled by the moral dilemma of abortion. But throughout the column he minimizes the connection between the fetus and the woman in whose uterus the fetus is, as he puts it, an "occupant." As historian Linda Gordon has written, "Reproduction involves a relationship that is unique, and treating the fetus as an individual entrapped in a uterus does not adequately express this relationship."

Because Christopher accepts the equation Alive + Human = Child, he views the fetus as having rights. Because he minimizes the mother's role in pregnancy, he does not see her rights as paramount. (On the contrary, he sees the defense of women's rights as selfishness.) Instead, he believes that the rights of fetuses and those of women—"the two conceptions" in his interesting choice of words—need not be "permanently at war." Here is another evasion. Once the fetus is viewed as having rights equal to or greater than those of the mother, the state has almost unlimited ability to intervene in pregnancy, and in many cases has begun to exercise it.

Christopher claims to be concerned about the "racial implications" of abortion, although here again he never makes clear what he means. Yet the defense of fetal rights will have its harshest impact on poor and black women, who are most likely to use the public clinics, hospitals and drug programs that will bring them to the attention of the state. Ellen Willis, writing in *The Village Voice* ("The Wrongs of Fetal Rights," April 11), cites a *New England Journal of Medicine* survey that found that 81 percent of court-ordered Caesareans were performed on black, Hispanic and Asian women.

Although Christopher disavows the distortions and demagogy of the antiabortion leadership, his column is full of right-wing buzzwords that keep the debate at a high emotional pitch. He claims that women in the antiabortion movement feel "revulsion at the idea of the disposable fetus," a slur on the character and motivation of women who have abortions. "Emotions are not the deciding factor," he says, and then goes on to talk about "still[ing] a heartbeat, switch[ing] off a developing brain . . . break[ing] some bones." Ninety percent of the abortions in this country are performed in the first trimester, when there are no bones to break.

Christopher writes that "'we' do not like what 'we' hear about gender abortions." According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, no statistics are kept on the reasons for abortion. But rumors of widespread gender abortion surface and are reported. The perpetrators are usually said to be members of the diplomatic community, particularly Asians, who so prefer boys to girls that the women have abortions in the fifth month, after amniocentesis has revealed the fetal sex. If there are a few instances of this practice—the Guttmacher Institute thinks there may be—it can hardly be viewed, as Christopher has it, as an ironic consequence of the women's movement. Rather, it would be a consequence of the technology of amniocentesis, and of a lack of respect for women.

Christopher puts forward a "historic compromise" that would presumably remove the

(*Continued on Page 678*)

READING LIST

The New Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women, by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984)

Women Under Attack: Victories, Backlash and the Fight for Reproductive Freedom, by the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse; edited by Susan E. Davis (South End Press, Boston, 1988)

The Female Body and the Law, by Zillah R. Eisenstein (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988)

Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community, by Faye D. Ginsburg (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989)

Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America, by Linda Gordon (Penguin, New York, 1977; revised edition due 1990)

Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion, by Beverly Wildung Harrison (Beacon Press, Boston, 1983)

Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood, by Kristin Luker (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984)

Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy, 1800–1900, by James C. Mohr (Oxford University Press, New York, 1979)

Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom, by Rosalind Pollack Petchesky (Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1984)

Reproductive Laws for the 1990s, edited by Nadine Taub and Sherrill Cohen (Humana Press, Clifton, N.J., 1989)

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EDITORIALS.

State Troopers

Let's not waste any more time proving that George Bush is the Prince of Drift. Let's take on, instead, the benefit-of-the-doubt school, which defends the President's passivity on the ground that he isn't actually doing much harm.

Consider his ambassadorial appointments. From the list of nominees, a number of names and places stand out: Michael Armacost, a former Ambassador to the Philippines, goes to Japan; James Lilley hops over from South Korea to China; Donald Gregg, who acquired some notoriety as Vice President Bush's national security adviser, is set to take Lilley's place in Seoul. West Germany, which will be as crucial to the ending of the cold war as it was to its beginning, will receive the veteran diplomat Lieut. Gen. Vernon Walters. Bush's choice for Mexico is John Negroponte, whose career includes time in Vietnam and, more recently, Honduras.

Three of these five men have already sailed through the confirmation process. But the Gregg and Negroponte nominations are in trouble. From a Third World point of view, Bush could hardly have made two more inappropriate and insulting choices. In both South Korea and Mexico,

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social change has reached an ominous point of conflict; each country is beset, for quite different reasons, by what social scientists might call a crisis of representation, with long-entrenched authoritarian regimes confronting angry and politicized populations.

South Korea, one of the economic success stories in the recent brutal division of the Third World into winners and losers, is passing through a carefully supervised transition from a bureaucratic military regime with a fondness for cracking skulls to a more modern system of controlled pluralism. Ranged against the Roh Tae Woo government are nationalistic students and angry industrial workers, both bitterly hostile to the United States. In Mexico, one of the Third World's losers, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, battered by recession and debt, has managed to squander most of its legitimacy and has to contend with a mass movement that is struggling to transform last summer's electoral insurgency into a political alternative.

The U.S. Senate's doubts about Negroponte and Gregg stem from their well-publicized actions in the Iran/*contra* affair—Negroponte as Ambassador to Honduras and engineer of the *contra* buildup; Gregg as liaison to the *contra* resupply network. But dwelling on the Iran/*contra* sins of Bush's nominees is to see only the trees, not the forest. For, as the Oliver North trial has made apparent, this was no rogue operation. For Bush's men, it was only the latest in a string of services rendered to empire.

Because of their *contra* connections, Negroponte and Gregg have become well known. But their grayer fellow nominees have also muddied themselves in the swamps of U.S. foreign policy. When Armacost was Ambassador to the Philippines, such was his fondness for the Marcos family, before its disgrace, that he was nicknamed "Armaclose" and "Ourmarcos"; Walters—the incarnation of Napoleon's description of diplomats as "police in grand costume"—has had his finger in more secret pies over the past forty years than any diplomat alive.

Like the President they serve, the five are no strangers to the spook business; most of them have spent long periods in it. Lilley was the C.I.A.'s China specialist when George Bush was head of the U.S. mission in Beijing; Walters, number two at the C.I.A. in 1976 when Bush took over as director; Gregg, a thirty-year agency veteran when he joined the Vice President's staff in 1982. Each of these men bears strikingly the mark of the early and mid-1970s—the Ford period, to which the present Administration is often compared. Like today, it was a time when Washington was much preoccupied with managing crises in the larger countries of the Third World. Walters was a good friend to Pinochet's secret police, the DINA; Gregg served with the C.I.A. in South Korea, where he now hopes to return, from 1973 to 1975, an especially grim period of the Park Chung Hee dictatorship; Negroponte was a senior aide to Henry Kissinger during the secret bombing of Cambodia.

This is the diplomatic gene pool from which a U.S. equivalent of Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking" is supposed to arise?

Loan Sharks

"If you see a banker jump out of the window, jump after him. There's sure to be a profit in it." This piece of European lore neatly fits the latest shenanigans over the Third World debt, a bit of financial sleight of hand to shift risk from the huge money center banks to the taxpayers of the industrial world.

Press reports might lead one to think that Nicholas Brady, the new Treasury Secretary, has invented an altruistic scheme to reduce the debt burden of Mexicans, Brazilians and others. In the received view, the large New York banks—Citicorp, Chase Manhattan and the rest—having learned that blood can't be wrung from a stone, will now negotiate new and less onerous terms with their debtors. To reward the good work, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, those eleemosynary institutions, will help pay for the venture. Markets, however, sometimes know better, and after some study they decided the Brady scheme would add to banks' profits. Bank shares rose smartly.

The Brady plan is wondrously unclear in detail if alarmingly transparent in its main lines. In part, the murkiness is deliberate. In part, it reflects a tradition that goes back at least as far as Andrew Mellon: Clever men are rarely appointed Treasury Secretary.

The central point is that the debt crisis threatens the big banks, not the Latin borrowers. They could repudiate their bonds, declare moratoriums on interest and principal and walk away with little damage. Indeed, several have done so for short periods to gain attention. The bankers vow to make no new loans to defaulters, but this is an empty threat. Since Mexico threatened to go belly up in 1982, the big banks have carefully lent Third World debtors just enough to have their own loans serviced.

The banks are in real trouble because the debtors could bankrupt them. In 1982, Third World debt was three times stockholder equity in the big banks, or enough to wipe them out three times over. Today, after selling off some paper at a heavy discount, the banks have built up their reserves and got the debt-to-equity ratio down to little more than 100 percent. J.P. Morgan is probably safe, but Manufacturers Hanover, Chase, BankAmerica, Chemical and others could still disappear under the weight of defaulted loans.

That, of course, is unthinkable. The bank executives who pressed billions of dollars in loans on corrupt, incompetent and frequently cruel Third World regimes in the 1970s knew that their institutions were too important to be allowed to go under. Their folly must be underwritten, whether by the Federal Reserve, the I.M.F. or the World Bank. In contemporary capitalism, risk is socialized for the dinosaurs.

How could bank executives behave so recklessly? The answer, which can be found in detail in Harvey Segal's forthcoming book *Corporate Makeovers* (Viking), lies in the motivation of modern managers. Separated from the owners, these managers seek to maximize not profit but their own pay, bonuses and perquisites. These depend on

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the volume of deposits or loans. The rule, then, is first get the money out; worry about risk later.

Brady's plan to save the banks from their Third World folly means either swapping new loans for old or making deals to bring interest rates down, perhaps by one-third. Under a swap, the banks might trade $10 billion of their present, shaky Mexican loans for, say, $7 billion of solid new ones. Either way, Mexico would pay less interest.

But now the banks won't have to rely on the uncertain good will of the Mexican government. The new loans or interest payments will be guaranteed by the I.M.F. and the World Bank. The banks will give up some dicey I.O.U.s—discounted Mexican debt now sells for less than 50 cents on the dollar on the open market—for a solid stream of interest.

In the end, it is the citizens of developed nations who will pay for the guarantees. The I.M.F. gets its funds directly from governments; the World Bank raises its money cheaply because the United States and other major Western governments put up its capital and stand behind its debt.

It may not be altogether clear why the banks should escape so cheaply from a mink-lined trap of their own devising. If the Democrats had anyone with the courage and financial acumen of Henry Reuss, Estes Kefauver or the elder Albert Gore, this could become a serious issue. But we live in a time when petty chiseling is made to appear a dark stain on the nation and genuine scandal is dressed up as economic wisdom. BERNARD D. NOSSITER

Bernard D. Nossiter, a veteran reporter with a special interest in finance, is completing a study of the postwar U.S. economy for Harper & Row. His latest book, The Global Struggle for More, *was published by Harper & Row in 1987.*

Jump Start

On his recent visit to London, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev identified the big issue in arms control: President George Bush's delay in renewing the Geneva negotiations that adjourned before the 1988 election. "Continuity is the name of the game," said Gorbachev spokesman Gennady Gerasimov. "We are a little bit apprehensive we could be losing it."

According to the Administration, the talks are on hold pending a full review of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union and arms control, to be completed by the middle of this month at the latest. As news of the review discussions leaks out, it's becoming clearer that the Bush Administration may not begin where Reagan's left off.

Because of the Reagan Administration's unwillingness to commit itself to a seven-to-ten-year guarantee against development of any Star Wars breakthroughs, the 50 percent arms cut negotiated in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start) process was never finalized. It was apparent even during the election campaign, however, that Bush did not share Reagan's passion for the Strategic Defense Initiative. Thus, most observers assumed that the Start cuts were around the corner. But the leading international security figures in the new Administration, while not Star Wars fanatics, are Start skeptics.

National security adviser Brent Scowcroft and his former boss Henry Kissinger (out of office but back at the center of power) are deeply distrustful of Gorbachev and doubt the prospects of his reforms. This was one of Kissinger's stated reasons for his initial opposition to—and very grudging acceptance of—the intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty negotiated under Reagan. Nonetheless, Bush asked Kissinger to visit Gorbachev in January to assure him that the current review is serious and not just a stalling tactic.

Both Kissinger and Scowcroft have begun to make known their opposition to a process of weapons cuts that can have no end point but zero. They argue that nuclear deterrence has worked thus far to maintain a balance between the superpowers; as Scowcroft has said, "Why tamper with success?" He claims that the current deterrent force structure is vulnerable if Start cuts are made without the addition of the very expensive Midgetman missile system. Midgetman, because it is mobile and carries only one warhead, is a "survivable" weapon—one that can effectively threaten retaliation after a first strike. But other weapons experts, like Michael May, associate director of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the major weapons research center, discount Scowcroft's claim. May says a 50 percent rollback in strategic arsenals would leave the United States with retaliatory forces adequate to deter a first strike, even without the Midgetman.

The Administration has now decided to ask Congress for $25 billion for Midgetman, a price tag somewhat below the original $35 billion to $45 billion projections. It has made the first step seem easy by requesting only $100 million for Midgetman research in 1990. But in the current budget climate, it may be impossible to find long-term funding for Midgetman. If the Administration insists on linking Midgetman to Start, we could end up with neither.

Another approach to the survivability issue, the Administration suggests, is total elimination of the SS-18, the backbone of the Soviet strategic arsenal. While that addresses the perceived vulnerability of diminished U.S. forces, Gorbachev can hardly accept a proposal that the Soviet Union unilaterally abandon major elements of its land-based missile force. Just the fact that unilateral concessions are again on the agenda underscores Bush's retreat from the heady days of the summits at the end of the Reagan years.

This is not a fine-tuning of Start. The Administration appears to be linking that treaty to an expensive new weapons system and/or to changes in the structure of Soviet nuclear forces that would take years to negotiate, even with good will on both sides. In effect, then, it appears that Bush is preparing to move reductions in the strategic nuclear arsenals of the superpowers onto a back burner, jeopardizing the dramatic progress made since the Reykjavik summit of October 1986. ALAN GILCHRIST AND LOUISE HALPER

Alan Gilchrist is associate professor of psychology at Rutgers University. Louise Halper teaches at New York University School of Law. They often write on arms control.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Hitler: Eternal Springtime

There was no need to hasten to Braunau, as so many journalists did, to find material for reflection upon the centennial of Hitler's birth. A simple reading of the day's papers sufficed. Neatly in time for the anniversary, the Syracuse *Herald-Journal* disclosed on April 19 that twenty years ago the evangelist Billy Graham sent Richard Nixon a secret plan urging him to bomb dikes "which could overnight destroy the economy of North Vietnam."

Graham's memorandum to Nixon, declassified earlier this year by the National Security Council, is dated April 15, 1969, and was drafted after the evangelist met in Bangkok with a group of missionaries who had traveled thither from Vietnam. These men of God said that if peace talks in Paris, by then eleven months old, failed, then Nixon should withdraw American troops but keep permanent bases in Vietnam, along with overwhelming air power. They also called for a buildup of the South Vietnamese Air Force, the arming of "loyal" mountain tribes and formation of a government in exile to "liberate the North." Above all, they urged, with Graham's imprimatur, the bombing of the dikes.

In the final months of World War II the Nazis sought to delay the advance of Allied troops by opening the dikes in Holland. This barbaric stroke against the Dutch population was ordered by the German High Commissioner in Holland, Seyss-Inquart. By the end of 1944 approximately 500,000 acres of land had been flooded, leading to savage disrepair of the Dutch economy and what Gabriel Kolko called "the most precipitous decline in food consumption any West European country suffered during the war."

Of the 185 Nazis indicted at Nuremberg, twenty-four were sentenced to death, of whom one was Seyss-Inquart. Kolko's observation came in testimony lodged with the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal, which in 1967 conducted hearings on U.S. war crimes in Indochina. Seyss-Inquart merely opened dikes. On May 13, 1953, in Korea, as Kolko also testified, the U.S. Air Force attacked and destroyed the Toksan dam near Pyongyang. The aim was to wreck the system irrigating three-quarters of North Korea's rice farms. Adjacent dams were bombed on succeeding days, while armistice talks went on.

In their excellent *Korea: The Unknown War*, Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings present a U.S.A.F. photograph of the ruined Chasan dam. They also quote from the main U.S.A.F. study of the bombings: "These strikes, largely passed over by the press, military observers, and news commentators . . . constituted one of the most significant air operations of the Korean war." The study remarks that "attacks in May would be most effective psychologically," when the arduous labor of rice transplanting had been completed but before the roots became firmly embedded.

Flood waters bursting through the destroyed Toksan dam "scooped clean 27 miles of valley below," drowned the civilians sheltering underground and sent floods into Pyongyang. The U.S.A.F. study tranquilly stressed, "To the Communists the smashing of the dams meant primarily the destruction of their chief sustenance—rice. The Westerner can little conceive the awesome meaning that the loss of this staple food commodity has for the Asian—starvation and slow death." It also cited the frantic repair efforts "carried out round-the-clock, with complete disregard to the delayed-action bombs strewn over the target area." This was noted in another official military history as an example of "oriental fatalism."

And Vietnam? While all eyes were on the North, where irrigation damage was relatively minor, the U.S.A.F. destroyed dam upon dam in the South, without reproach. In 1969 Henry Kamm reported that in Batanang Province southeast of Hue there had been a dike "blasted by American jets to deprive the North Vietnamese of a food supply." (The peasantry in the area, including refugees from My Lai, had been herded into a camp over which flew a flag bearing the words "We Thank You for Liberating Us From Communist Terror.") Kamm returned after two years to find the dike unrepaired and salt water from the South China Sea submerging the fields where rice once grew.

The Real Winner

In 1951, a couple of years before the spirit of Seyss-Inquart hovered above those North Korean dams, President Juan José Arévalo of Guatemala made a farewell address. "I took over the presidency possessed with romantic fire, believing as always in the intrinsic nobility of man. . . . Roosevelt's speeches told us . . . that the horror of the killing would return our liberties to nations and to men." Then Arévalo described the conspiracies by indigenous mercenaries and "banana magnates, compatriots of Roosevelt's." That, Arévalo said sadly, "was when the ingenuous and romantic schoolmaster discovered from the presidency of his country the extent to which brilliant international sermonizing about democracy and human liberties is perishable. . . . I came to confirm that, according to certain international norms, . . . little countries don't have a right to sovereignty. . . . The arms of the Third Reich were broken and conquered . . . but in the ideological dialogue . . . Roosevelt lost the war. The real winner was Hitler."

Three years later the United States overthrew the government of Arévalo's successor, Jácobo Arbenz. The real winner was indeed Hitler, and not just on the ideological plane, as the Guatemalan holocaust since 1954 makes clear. But the historical record is being decently cleaned up. Stephen Kinzer, writing about Guatemala in *The New York Times Magazine* a few weeks ago, omitted any reference to U.S. complicity in the coup, even though he once co-authored a good book, *Bitter Fruit*, about the affair.

Kinzer, though, is only a hack in history's rewrite room. What about the grandees like George Kennan, who helped formulate the notions of "containment" that led to the bombing of the dikes in Korea and Vietnam, and who is now hailed, amid publication of his dreary travel notes, as "the last wise man"? Four years before Arbenz was over-

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thrown, in June 1954, Kennan visited Rio de Janeiro for a meeting of U.S. heads of mission in Latin America. What means should be employed against enemies of the United States? he asked them, and promptly rejoined:

> The final answer might be an unpleasant one, but . . . we should not hesitate before police repression by the local government. This is not shameful since the Communists are essentially traitors. . . . It is better to have a strong regime in power than a liberal government if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by Communists.

And so to "strong" regimes insured by the United States: to Guatemala, and to Argentina, and to Chile, and to Brazil, and to British Guyana and to John F. Kennedy's view that "governments of the civil-military type of El Salvador are the most effective in containing Communist penetration in Latin America."

Adolf's Heirs

Arena leader Roberto d'Aubuisson once said it plainly: "You Germans were very intelligent. You realized that the Jews were responsible for the spread of Communism and you began to kill them." As if to repulse any illusions that d'Aubuisson had stepped aside in favor of "moderation," Col. Sigifredo Ochoa, vice president of the Legislative Assembly, recently declared, "The methods of political solution are exhausted. Only violent means remain. Let us not kid ourselves. That's what the armed forces are there for. . . . In 1945 the decision was taken to end a war by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Politicians and journalists here still cling, with nervous fervor, to the idea that there is a "Cristiani option" that will absolve Congress of guilt as it sends the money south. But who is running the show? Vice President-elect Francisco Merino, a longtime associate of d'Aubuisson sadly spared from brisk propulsion upward to meet his maker after a bomb attack on his house, is likely to be Minister of the Interior, overseeing the Treasury and National Police.

Nominated by d'Aubuisson as the new president of Arena is Armando Calderon Sol, Mayor of San Salvador, who plans to organize "community watch" squads in 150 of the city's shantytowns. This is a predicate for the "total war" that Arena and the military talk about, most recently in their call for a state of siege. Included in this "total war" will be the dismantling of peasant cooperatives, cutting of credits and supplies in hopes of forcing desperate peasants to sell land back to the oligarchs, and elimination of taxes on sugar and coffee exports—all proposals being studied by a legislative commission headed by d'Aubuisson.

But most of all "total war" means murder of the opposition. "When Arena talks about 'total war,' " says Humberto Centeno, a leader of the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers, "we know they don't mean the F.M.L.N., because there's been total war against them for nine years. For workers total war implies the destruction of all the unions. . . . for Arena, total war means another 100,000 or 200,000 more dead." El Salvador's nongovernmental Human Rights Commission maintains that more than 800 civilians were killed by death squads and other government security forces in the first three months of this year. El Rescate (2675 West Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90006) provides a day by day chronicle of documented cases.

On April 17, Merino issued a list of "terrorists"—trade union activists, human rights workers, etc.—which is essentially a schedule of assassination. Already nearly one hundred have been arrested and tortured. On April 19 troops surrounded four labor and human rights offices in San Salvador, abducted two human rights workers from Comadres and stormed the offices of the Christian Committee for the Displaced, beating women, children and the old. Two days later thirty-eight people were still in custody, believed to be under torture. The pretext here was the attack on Merino's house and the assassination of Attorney General Roberto García Alvarado. U.S. Ambassador William Walker joined in the denunciations of F.M.L.N. terror. But responsibility for the attacks was in fact claimed by the Gerardo Barrios Civic Forces, a death squad, presumably in retaliation for García's reluctance (as part of Arena's "kinder, gentler" P.R. campaign) to abandon investigation of the kidnapping ring run by close associates of d'Aubuisson.

The onset of total war has not passed entirely unnoticed in the U.S. press. Chris Norton has provided fine reports in *The Christian Science Monitor* and *In These Times.* But the F.M.L.N.'s latest peace proposal, presented in Washington in April, went almost unmentioned; the best account was by Mike Zielinski in *The Guardian* for April 19. (*The Nation* has yet to discuss the Arena victory, the F.M.L.N. peace proposals or the rise in death squad killings.) The F.M.L.N. now calls upon Arena to declare itself a "government of transition" and to enter fresh negotiations toward elections in six months with F.M.L.N. participation.

The Democratic leadership in Congress reacted to Arena's victory with calm. House majority leader Tom Foley said on March 20, "We'll keep aid flowing. We will assume the new Arena government will move to respect human rights." Majority whip Tony Coelho confided to MacNeil and Lehrer the same day that "a lot of things going on right now in El Salvador are very positive." They should study the autopsy report on Christina Gomez, teacher and prominent women's organizer, taken by security forces in front of her pupils on April 5, tortured with acid and shot dead.

Before Congress is a bill, introduced by Robert Kastenmeier with only twenty-four co-sponsors, calling for an end to U.S. aid and a withdrawal of advisers. So few just men and women in Sodom! Ninety-nine House Democrats and two liberal Republicans opposed "nonlethal" aid to the *contras* for the right reasons in the recent "bipartisan" vote. This is the extent of Congressional backbone. So the question, in Hitler's centennial year, is whether U.S. citizens and their Congress will continue to nourish Hitler's children in El Salvador to the tune of $1.5 million a day.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN AND JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Liman's Defense

"The idea that a dismissal of conspiracy and theft charges against Oliver L. North would mean that President Reagan's true role in the Iran-contra affair will never be disclosed is naïve and represents an exaggerated notion of what new facts a trial could produce." So declared the eminent Arthur Liman on the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* in January. Recall that Liman was chief counsel of the Senate Iran/*contra* committee, whose image has been tarnished by the very release of "new facts" during the trial. These new facts pertain specifically to the conspiracy that special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh was not allowed to pursue due to the classification of key documents. The latest new facts were forced out by Brendan Sullivan, North's bulldog attorney, who was less respectful of the White House than Liman and his fellow managers of the Congressional probe. We can only imagine what other material—information missed by Liman's committee—would have come out had Walsh been able to prosecute the conspiracy charge. We hope that the disclosures at the trial do nothing to shake "junk bond" financier Michael Milken's faith in his defense counsel, Arthur Liman, Esq.

■ 'But, Senator, If We Can't Pay Drug Dealers . . . '

Other facts that eluded Liman and Co. can be found in the long-awaited 437-page final report of Senator John Kerry's subcommittee on narcotics and terrorism. It concludes that "U.S. officials involved in Central America failed to address the drug issue for fear of jeopardizing the war effort against Nicaragua." The study is official confirmation of a well-known fact: Our cold warriors routinely compromise antidrug efforts in prosecuting their crusade. The subcommittee has proposed several legislative remedies. One would prohibit U.S. intelligence agencies from making payments to convicted drug dealers except when authorized by the Attorney General in connection with a criminal investigation. Another would ban the State Department from contracting with any individual or company linked to drug-related activity. Such laws should be unnecessary; alas, the report, which documents how Foggy Bottom subsidized air transport companies run by drug traffickers (see Christopher Hitchens, "Minority Report," May 8), persuasively demonstrates that they are not. Now how will the national security bureaucrats argue against these measures?

■ The Saga of North's Notes

The Kerry report provides further reason to be suspicious of Liman, who scoffed at allegations of *contra* drug involvement during the hearings. In 1987, Kerry arranged for his staff to review the "North notebooks"—2,848 pages of jottings North made on a daily basis from 1984 through 1986. Nearly half of the pages, some of which made references to drug trafficking, contained deletions, and 155 pages were blacked out completely. Kerry's staff learned that neither the Iran/*contra* committees nor the White House had access to uncensored versions of North's notes. North or his lawyers had deleted material that they judged to be outside the jurisdiction of the Iran/*contra* committees before producing them in response to a subpoena. The committees accepted the deletions, and the Reagan White House assigned the notes a high level of classification.

Kerry's attempt to declassify 534 pages containing references to drugs met with only partial success. The White House would not declassify many references because they could not determine what they meant without reading the portions deleted by North. In the meantime, although the White House declared the notebooks to be highly sensitive Federal property, it allowed them to remain in the possession of North and his attorneys, who are not cleared to handle classified material.

Last year Brendan Sullivan refused to respond to a subcommittee subpoena for the complete notebooks, a copy of which is in the possession of Walsh. "Kerry wants those notebooks," says a Kerry aide. "He will get them." One can expect more "new facts" to emerge if Kerry or Walsh makes public unexpurgated sections of the text.

■ School for Scandal

A few issues back we told the Alger-esque tale (Horatio, not Hiss) of Guillermo Tabraue, the Bay of Pigs veteran who allegedly ran a $75 million dope ring out of a Miami jewelry store while moonlighting as an informant for the C.I.A. Now consider Col. Johnny Lopez, one of the highest-ranking Bay of Pigs veterans serving in the U.S. armed forces. He is at the center of a growing scandal involving arms sales to El Salvador.

Lopez was recently indicted for accepting $70,000 in kickbacks on the sale of rifles to the Salvadoran armed forces. He is a highly decorated Vietnam War veteran who served as a U.S. military adviser in El Salvador, with responsibility for procurement. His lawyers call him a patriot, impugned by a plea-bargaining arms merchant. Lopez allegedly steered contracts for G-3 rifle barrels to the Springfield Armory, an Illinois gun company. The firm's president, who has turned state's witness, says that to get the contracts, he paid off Lopez as well as Salvadoran officers.

This is not the first accusation of corruption leveled against Lopez. According to a sworn deposition in a civil suit that was settled out of court in Miami late last year, he also improperly influenced the sale of military field radios to the government of El Salvador in 1984. Nor is Lopez the first target of such investigations. In 1986 three men in Virginia were convicted for participation in a kickback scheme involving the sale of bullets to El Salvador. Two senior Salvadoran officers were unindicted co-conspirators in that case. An investigation into yet another shady arms deal, approved by the U.S. Military Group in El Salvador, is now under way at the Pentagon, targeting senior Salvadoran officers. The financial corruption of U.S. military aid to El Salvador is but one part of the larger corruption of U.S. policy, as revealed in the Iran/*contra* scandal.

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Smoke

EDWARD SOREL

AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THESE CHARTS, SALES TO UPPER- AND MIDDLE-INCOME WHITES KEEP DROPPING...
...WHILE SALES TO BLACK SMOKERS GO UP IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO OUR ADS IN THEIR PUBLICATIONS.
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT NO AMOUNT OF ADVERTISING WILL GET EDUCATED WHITES TO SMOKE CIGARETTES.
I THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT THE BULK OF OUR ADVERTISING TARGET BLACKS, WHO ARE LESS EDUCATED.
BUT BLACKS WILL CATCH ON. THEY'LL ACCUSE US OF DELIBERATELY TRYING TO KILL THEM!
NOT IF WE CALL IT "AFFIRMATIVE ADVERTISING"!
Edward Sorel

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ARTICLES.

ASIAN ALADDIN'S CAVE

Dreaming of the Forty-Hour Week

DENIS MACSHANE

Penang, Malaysia

In Malaysia, there is a remarkable man who has reached the elusive goal of medieval alchemists—the transmutation of metal. He is the country's Registrar of Trade Unions, and a few years ago, when the Malaysian Metalworkers Union came politely to him to explain that hundreds of workers at the famous Selangor and Penang pewter plants wished to join the union, the registrar announced that pewter (an alloy of 98 percent tin with lead and antimony) was not a metal. In light of this remarkable scientific declaration, the pewter workers could not logically join a metalworkers union.

This kind of Alice in Wonderland behavior ("A union means just what I choose it to mean, neither more, nor less") is emblematic of the slide into authoritarianism in Malaysia. In the past eighteen months Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has locked up more than a hundred political opponents, temporarily barred publication of three opposition newspapers, fired the Chief Justice and suspended five other Supreme Court judges, three of whom were eventually reinstated. For Mahathir, "to be generous is madness, to be humane insane," as the Malaysian jazz-rock band Suara put it in a powerful new cassette of songs about human rights in Malaysia.

Compared to this frontal assault on political freedoms and legal rights, the decision of the Registrar of Trade Unions may not seem so important. But the handling of Malaysia's growing industrial working class is a major headache for Mahathir, as it is for the other Asian countries that are transforming their agricultural economies into world manufacturing centers.

Take, for example, Malaysia's electronics industry, now the country's top manufacturing export earner. Export processing zones for the industry, first set up in 1972, have attracted Japanese, European and, above all, U.S. electronics firms. Rich Americans who visit Penang, the island jewel in the Straits of Malacca where Somerset Maugham wrote some of his best stories, will hardly notice the rows of discreet single-story factories that line the road from the airport to the silver beaches. Yet here is one of the Aladdin's Caves of contemporary Asia. From the factory of Robert Bosch, West Germany's leading producer of automotive electronics, come more than a million frequency-hunting radiocassette players a year, to be slotted into BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes in far-off Europe. Hitachi and Sanyo are here too, as is Advanced Micro Devices, whose chips power the computers of I.B.M. and those of many American households. Labor theorists tell us that we live in a "post-Fordist" age, but here in Malaysia thousands of factory employees still work together under a single roof.

The image of masses of workers wedded to a single owner's assembly line is one aspect of Fordism. But it has a second and more important aspect: Henry Ford's insight that allowing the masses of workers sufficient income to buy the products they make increases consumption, output and profits, and allows for the creation of a capitalist welfare state. It was Ford who introduced the forty-hour week and paid $5 a day back in the early part of the century, when his fellow capitalists said that it was madness to treat the workers so generously.

In Malaysia today, workers in the electronics industry can only dream of a forty-hour week and $5 a day. Here in Penang, it's a six-day work week with compulsory overtime and night shifts and an annual per capita income of $1,800. Young women find their eyes cannot focus after peering down a microscope for six or seven hours at a stretch assembling circuits for laptop computers and cordless telephones. Workers live four or five to a small flat and are given medical benefits only one-tenth of those enjoyed by management.

Half a century ago, U.S. trade unions took up Henry Ford's paternalistic ideas and insisted on them as a basic right, not a matter of management grace and favor. A similar process took place in Western Europe after 1945. But in Penang today, workers dare not call publicly for unions. "We'd be sacked if we tried to organize," said one worker for Robert Bosch, which has union nominees on its board of directors in Germany. Here, the semantic games of the registrar have little relevance.

Malaysia's electronics industry employs about 90,000 people, nearly all of them working for foreign companies. It was created in an effort to match the growth of Singapore and Taiwan, and decisions affecting it are taken at a high political level. Over the years, many attempts have been made to organize workers in the industry: recruitment, legal representations, complaints to the International Labor Organization. The Malaysian government has brushed them all aside.

And then, late last year, like the sudden sun that banishes the monsoon rain, a Cabinet decision appeared to bring that era to an end. Labor Minister Lee Kim Sai told a press conference that the government would allow the formation of a union for electronics workers. The industry was, he said, "strong and stable" enough to have a union. "We cannot stop workers deciding what they want to do," he went on, inviting the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (M.T.U.C.) to help set up unions. "Everyone in the factory was so happy when they heard the announcement," said one woman

Denis MacShane works for the Geneva-based International Metalworkers Federation and has written books on black unions in South Africa and Solidarity in Poland. He is currently working on a book on international labor issues in the 1990s.

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working for a U.S. company. Workers quickly formed a committee to register a union.

No one in Malaysia has any doubt that the shift came in response to a demand from U.S. unions to have Malaysia removed from its duty-free status under the Generalized System of Preferences. (The Reagan Administration was obliged, under pressure from organized labor and human rights groups, to make G.S.P. status subject to the exporting countries' records on trade union and other human rights.) One spur to the U.S. campaign against the Mahathir government was the arrest of M.T.U.C. secretary general V. David, after he had denounced repression in Malaysia at an international conference organized by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in 1987.

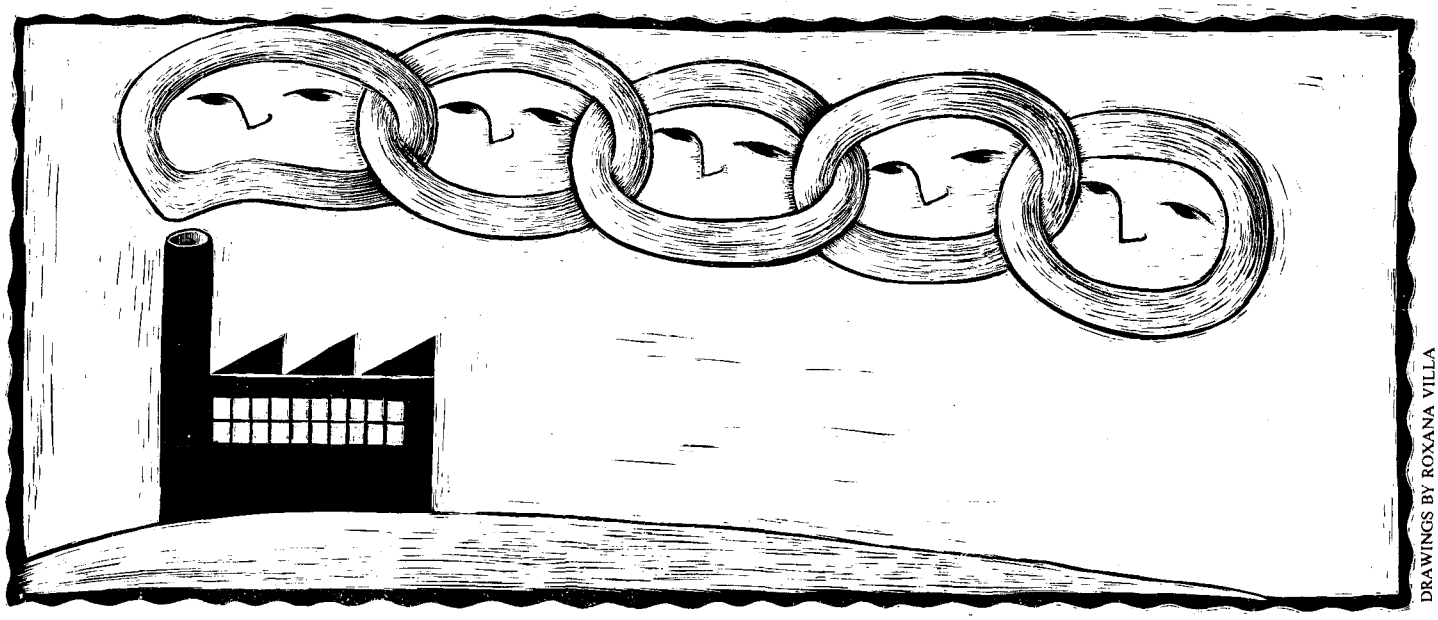
However, the euphoria of workers in the electronics industry proved short-lived. Within weeks of his press conference, Labor Minister Lee reversed himself. The most the government would allow would be "in-house" unions, which are rejected by workers as extensions of company control and are, in any case, against Malaysia's own Trade Union Act, which permits industry-wide unions. In-house unions "may appear to contradict the law, but it is policy," was all the hapless Lee could say.

Why this abrupt change of mind? Certainly the U.S. electronics companies that operate here—including Motorola, Intel, National Semi-Conductor, RCA, Advanced Micro Devices and Hewlett-Packard—were enraged. Most of them are not unionized in the United States, and Penang workers have been threatened with everything from closure and transfer of production to China to instant dismissal for anyone seen talking to an M.T.U.C. official. The Japanese company Hitachi was more subtle. It offered a three-month bonus to workers who signed a petition to the Labor Minister opposing the union. In Kuala Lumpur, the Americans read Lee the riot act. The *Asian Wall Street Journal* did its bit by reporting U.S. managers' concern and their threats to transfer production. It was a signal to companies throughout Asia that something menacing was taking shape in Malaysia.

So it is a stalemate for now, with workers here deeply disappointed. But the fight has a broader significance. Mahathir is trying to hold back a tide that is rising all over Asia. The price that the region has to pay for its rapid, wealth-generating industrialization is the birth of an industrial working class. In the United States, farm workers and immigrants who flocked from the fields and slums to the new factories in the first thirty years of this century also worked long hours for low wages under fear of dismissal if they formed a union. But the U.S. economy really flourished only when the great masses of industrial employees earned enough to buy what they made, a condition that most Asian industrial workers, outside of Japan, do not yet enjoy.

The extraordinary wave of strikes in South Korea in the past eighteen months, and the union growth that has accompanied it, are of enormous importance. A whole facade of managerial authority came crashing down as one factory after another was occupied and independent unions were formed. Historically, the rise of a democratic union movement in Korea is on a par with the great surge of workers into the French unions in 1935-36, or the upsurge of the black unions in South Africa in this decade. In Taiwan, too, there is increased activity by workers, the first strikes after decades of repression, and demands for the creation of independent unions. And in China, there has been dissatisfaction with the official unions, a rash of strikes, attacks on managers and other evidence of worker revolt.

Writers on the postwar global economy have tended to paint the new international division of labor as a still life in which the core countries of northern capital exploit the periphery of Asia and Latin America in their endless search for cheap labor and antiunion governments. But the situation is far from static; it is shifting and recomposing all the time. While labor in the core countries is weakened by the restructuring of technology and capital, and its progress is sometimes reduced to a feeble pace by tradition and institutional inertia, the periphery is on the move. In Korea, workers have even organized a union at I.B.M., one of the most ruthlessly antiunion of the giant corporations. Asian capi-



DRAWINGS BY ROXANA VILLA

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talism may be the most dynamic in the world, but Asian workers are also beginning to show their paces. □

HAVEL'S IMPRISONMENT

Fueling Demands For Czech Reform

HERMAN SCHWARTZ

Prague

The gusts of *glasnost* and *perestroika* blowing out of Mikhail Gorbachev's Moscow have reached Czechoslovakia and made its rulers shiver. Like true Brezhnevites, they have reacted with a dose of repression, but this time with a difference. The crackdown has been accompanied by a series of liberalizing moves, revealing conflict and confusion within the regime over how to deal with this new reality.

The most notorious action was the conviction of the noted playwright and human rights activist Vaclav Havel in February, just after Czechoslovakia had initialed the Vienna Concluding Agreement, refining and expanding the 1975 Helsinki Accords on basic human rights. Havel was prosecuted for some January radio broadcasts in which he allegedly incited people to hold an illegal memorial for Jan Palach, who burned himself to death twenty years ago in protest over the Soviet invasion of his country, and for interference with the police at a memorial rally a week later.

The case against Havel was so contrived and flimsy that even the judge remarked on its weakness. As Havel said in his appeal a month later, "The verdict would have been far more honest had it merely stated, 'Vaclav Havel, you are getting on our nerves, and so you will go to prison for nine months.'"

The outrage at Havel's conviction spilled far beyond the usual circles. Approximately 3,000 members of Czechoslovakia's official artistic and scientific community signed a petition in support of Havel, the first time those establishment types have made such a protest. Charter 77 has learned of government instructions to harass those who signed. Poland allowed two of Havel's plays to be staged the week of his trial, the first performances of his work there since 1981, when martial law was imposed; Premier Mieczyslaw Rakowski attended.

On appeal, Havel's sentence was reduced from nine months to eight and he was given a milder prison regimen, making him eligible for release on May 15, two weeks before a session of the Helsinki Accord signatories in Paris. Czechoslovakia will thus be able to avoid the embarrassment of having a Nobel Peace Prize nominee in prison for an innoc-

Herman Schwartz is a contributing editor of The Nation *and a professor of law at American University. He was asked to attend Vaclav Havel's trial by Helsinki Watch but was not admitted into the courtroom.*

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uous broadcast when it discusses human rights.

In the international focus on Havel, however, many others whom the regime has persecuted, in some cases more harshly, have been overlooked:

§ Jana Petrova, 22, of the Independent Peace Association, and Ota Veverka, 32, of the John Lennon Peace Club, were tried with five others on charges growing out of the Palach memorial in January. The seven had gone to place flowers at the spot where Palach killed himself, and for this they were charged with "hooliganism." Even though the prosecutor admitted his witnesses were weak, all seven defendants were convicted on February 22. Petrova got nine months in prison and Veverka twelve; the others received suspended sentences and fines.

§ Ivan Jirous, 45, a revered poet, philosopher and publisher of *samizdat*, was sentenced on March 9 to sixteen months' imprisonment for "attacking a state organ" and "harming the interest of the Republic abroad" by circulating a petition that blamed the authorities for the April 1988 death in prison of activist Pavel Wonka and called for reform of the Czechoslovak penal code and release of political prisoners. His co-defendant, Jiri Tichy, received six months.

§ Hana Marvanovna and Tomas Dvorak, members of the Independent Peace Association, were convicted of "preparation for incitement" on March 17 in connection with rallies last year. They have been in jail since last October, despite being given suspended sentences, because the prosecutor appealed and asked for their continued detention pending the outcome of the appeal.

There have been also innumerable detentions ranging from a few hours to almost five days; beatings; house searches; confiscation of writings, typewriters and books; and hugely increased penalties for ignoring police orders to move—up to 20,000 crowns, the equivalent of almost seven months' average wages.

Repression is of course not new to Czechoslovakia. Many Czechs and Slovaks have spent years in prison for such things as criticizing the government, writing poetry that is considered insulting to public officials, running for public office and informing Westerners about prison conditions. What is new is the reason for the current wave of repression—the awakening of the population from twenty years of torpor.

When I was in Czechoslovakia a year ago, there were few signs of protest beyond some demands for religious freedom and the activities of some courageous individuals, including the 1,200 to 1,300 signatories of Charter 77. Something happened during the next few months, however, and particularly to young people. It has often been noted that 1988 was the year of the "double eights." Many of the great events in Czechoslovak history occurred in years ending with "8": the creation of the modern democratic state in 1918; Munich in 1938; the Communist takeover in 1948; and the bloom and demise of the Prague Spring in 1968. The authorities were nervous, I was told last year, and as the second half of 1988 got under way, it turned out that they had good reason to be.

The twentieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion on August 21 provided the flashpoint. To everyone's amazement, thousands demonstrated in Prague. Many were young people, whom Alexander Dubcek, Communist Party General Secretary at the time of the invasion, called "the children of 1968": One 21-year-old demonstrator had been in a protest against the invasion when she was only three weeks old. The police responded to the August 21 events with brutality and numerous house searches and arrests.

That did not stop the aroused Czechoslovaks, however. Two relatively new groups, the Independent Peace Association and the Czech Children, announced a meeting shortly thereafter, on September 23 at the foot of the statue of Saint Wenceslas, to discuss the current problems. When several hundred people showed up, the police arrested many and forcibly removed them to the police station for interrogation.

On October 15 the Movement for Civil Liberties was formed. Its manifesto, signed by 120 of Czechoslovakia's most prominent human rights activists, called for political action to reshape the legal system, protect the rights to

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speech and belief, foster political and economic pluralism and save the environment. It also demanded the removal of Soviet troops. The police reacted by arresting many of the signatories in the early hours of October 27 and holding them for up to ninety-six hours while searching their homes and confiscating books, typewriters and other personal property. The following day some 5,000 people gathered at Wenceslas Square to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic. Police attacked them with water cannons, tear gas, truncheons and dogs and arrested nearly a hundred people.

A number of groups, including Charter 77, then planned an international symposium for November 11 to discuss how events in Czechoslovakia during the past seventy years have affected European history. Many distinguished foreign visitors came to Prague for the conference. But beginning November 10 some thirty-eight activists were put under house arrest to prevent the seminar from taking place. It was nevertheless hastily opened by Vaclav Havel—who was grabbed by the police within seconds.

A series of incidents this January was the most extended and spontaneous, and drew the harshest responses. On January 15, twenty-six people ventured to Wenceslas Square to lay flowers at the site of Jan Palach's self-immolation. They were intercepted by the police on their way to the subway and forced to turn back. The next day eight of them returned to place the flowers and were promptly arrested; a policeman later admitted in court that his orders were to arrest anyone who laid flowers, even peacefully. Havel was also arrested, though only a bystander.

That set off a week of daily spontaneous demonstrations during which police again used water cannons, truncheons and dogs, and made numerous arrests. Thursday, January 19, was a particularly brutal day. According to 21-year-old Sona Louzenska, "The security police were beating anyone who happened to get in their way; they were also pulling people out of the streetcars and beat one elderly man, who was walking peacefully toward the streetcar. I, together with some other people in the crowd, was pulled out and taken in handcuffs to the police station in Bartolomejska Street, where we were yelled at, beaten and kicked. Later we were ordered to stand facing the wall, with legs spread out and raised arms. We were not allowed to turn or move—otherwise we were beaten. The police handled young men between the ages of 14 and 20 especially brutally." Despite this harsh reaction, the demonstrations continued through Saturday.

Repression has not been the regime's only response, however. Obviously perplexed, Czechoslovakia's rulers have tried a few liberalizing measures. They have allowed some public meetings to be held, including one on Human Rights Day, December 10. They have stopped jamming Radio Free Europe. The Independent Peace Association is being permitted to meet publicly. The Czechoslovak press was allowed to publish the full text of the Polish agreements legalizing

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Solidarity. Some of the priests who were denied permits to practice because of their association with Charter 77 have had the permits temporarily restored. A few dissidents have actually been acquitted by the courts, and the sentencing seems more lenient.

The Havel case is perhaps the best example of the regime's floundering. There was plainly no basis for charging him, for Havel had done nothing remotely illegal, even by the elastic standards of the Czechoslovak penal law. The purpose of the prosecution, according to several observers, was to make it clear that no matter what happens in the Soviet Union, Poland or Hungary, the old bosses are still in charge in Czechoslovakia. Instead, the case set off an avalanche of criticism both at home and abroad, which probably forced the government to reduce Havel's sentence.

The Czechoslovak old guard is likely to face even more trouble, for the economy is in danger. For years Czechoslovakia had one of the few healthy economies in the Soviet bloc. This was the basis of the social contract: In return for economic well-being, the heirs of 1968 would be left alone to run the country, without much resistance, and the Czechoslovak people would concentrate on their private lives.

The sins of Soviet bloc economics are catching up with Czechoslovakia, though. In December office workers had their usual Christmas bonuses delayed a month because there were not enough consumer goods on the shelves to satisfy demand. In November, to conserve such goods, Czechoslovakia imposed a ban on taking a variety of products out of the country, much to the annoyance of its Eastern bloc neighbors who had been coming to Czechoslovakia to shop. Technological backwardness is everywhere. According to one observer, a hospital even in central Prague is only at the level of a 1960s London hospital. The Institute for Forecasting of the Academy of Sciences found that there has been too little investment in the economy; machinery is rundown and there is a shortage of spare parts. What investment there is has gone into heavy high-energy industries, which have had a devastating effect on the environment. If things get much worse, discontent and resistance will inevitably rise.

"An electric tension has struck the society," said Vaclav Havel in an interview last October. "It is becoming more restless, it is becoming more interested in everything; people are more daring, they are overcoming their fear, as if they were awakening from that long apathy, which lasted so many years." One of the defendants in the flower trial said to me, "The police brutality hasn't intimidated anyone. During that week [in January] our self-confidence rose steadily."

Czechoslovakia's Communist Party leaders know this and are frightened. They hold office only because of the Soviet rape of their country in 1968 and fear—rightly—that any significant loosening will dump them all into history's garbage can, for their unpopularity is monumental. Whether they will be able to hold off an upsurge of resentment and a yearning for democracy and freedom no one can comfortably predict. □

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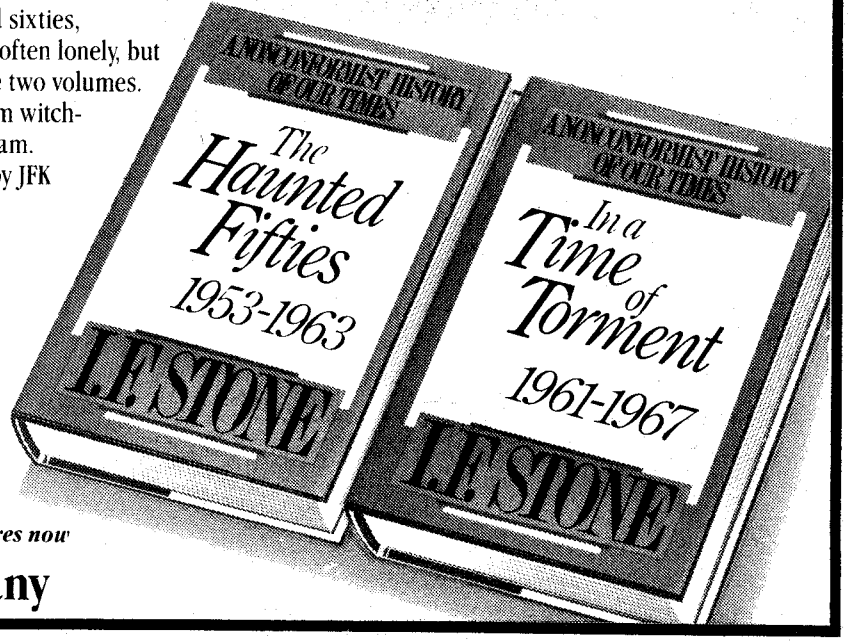
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THE DEMOPOLIS STORY

A Star Shines From Alabama

ANN WALDRON

Hernando de Soto and his crowd were the first white folks to set foot in the part of Chickasaw country that is now Demopolis, Alabama. Next, in 1817, came some of Napoleon's exiled followers, who sailed up the Tombigbee, anchored in the bend of the river just below the confluence of the Black Warrior, and climbed the white chalk bluffs of the river bank to try, unsuccessfully, to start a vine and olive colony. Then came slaveholding settlers from Virginia and the Carolinas to lay out vast cotton plantations and build splendid white-columned mansions. Demopolis not only survived the Civil War, Reconstruction and the boll weevil, it kept its pleasant ambiance. Rocking chairs line the front porch of its City Hall. The whole town turns out every year to celebrate Christmas on the River, a festival during which lighted floats that really float glide down the Tombigbee. All year long yachts tie up at the marina. Yankee tourists stop to tour Bluff Hall, a big house on the river whose owner entertained Confederate Gen. Leonidas Polk, and Gaineswood, Alabama's grandest antebellum mansion, with its domes, forty-foot ballroom and floor-to-ceiling mirrors imported from France.

Yet Demopolis is no Brigadoon, living in the past. Like many other Southern cities, it fought interminable legal battles to keep its schools segregated after *Brown v. Board of Education*; but since 1978 its fully integrated public school system has become its greatest asset, attracting new residents and new industry.

Demopolis, a black-belt city of 8,000 people, 49 percent black and 51 percent white, has what a staff member who works in community development at the University of Alabama has called "the only viable public school system in West Alabama." It is one of the few Deep South towns where most white families did not desert the public schools for private all-white academies established hastily when integration became a fact in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, enrollment at the all-white Demopolis Academy, founded in 1970, has declined from a peak of 330 to less than 200. T.E. Pearson, chair of the academy's board, concedes that it is having a tough time: "We have to keep tuition low because of competition from the public schools." Those schools flourish with an enrollment of 2,150, the student body 53 percent black and 47 percent white. The system is so good that people moving to the area to work in the James River paper processing plant in Butler, forty miles

Ann Waldron is a writer and editor currently working on a biography of the late Mississippi newspaper publisher W. Hodding Carter.

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away, settle in Demopolis and commute to their jobs each day. They drive through Linden, which has a troubled public school system and the thriving all-white Marengo Academy, and reach Butler, which also has poor public schools and a white academy.

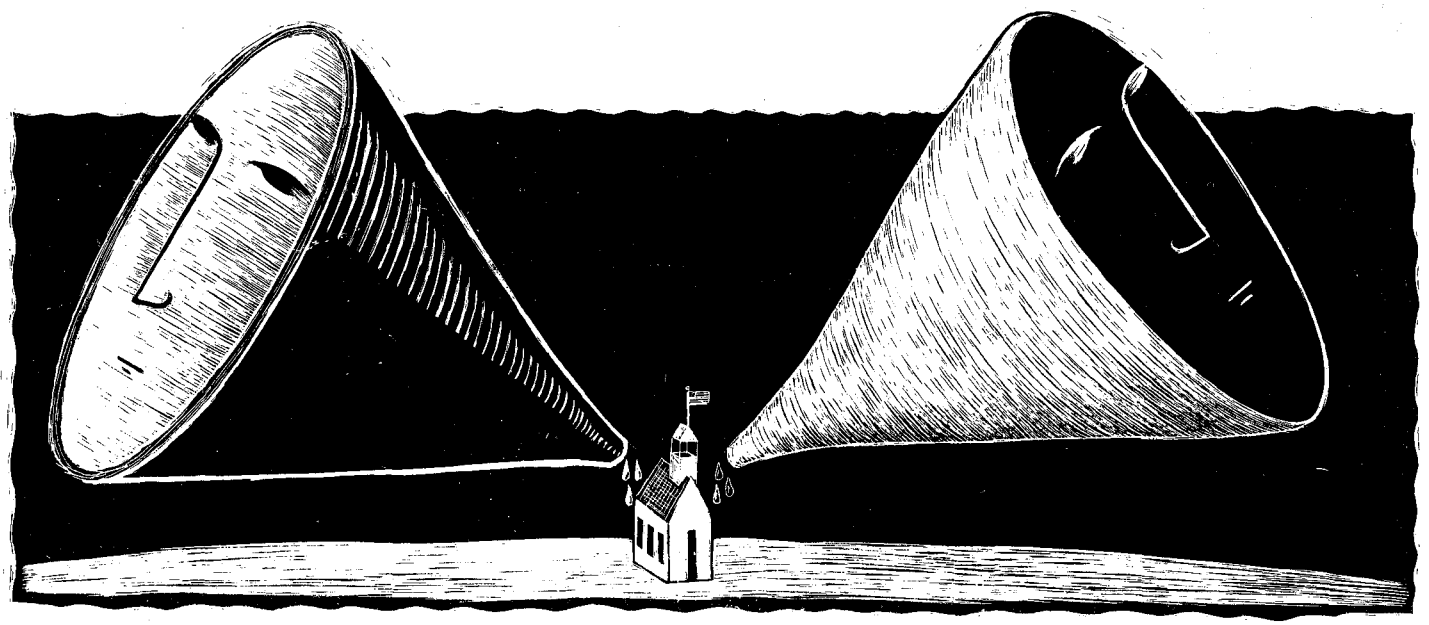
"It's amazing the number of people who moved here and brought new businesses here because of the schools," says Demopolis Mayor Austin Caldwell. "All the way around us, there's not a system like ours," says W.J. (Billy) Miles, executive secretary of the Demopolis Industrial Development Board, who likes to point out that the city has eleven industries, including Vanity Fair, with 500 employees, and Gulf States Paper, with 485 workers, and two more are expected to set up shop this year. "The public schools will do even better over the long haul. About a hundred executives from James River down in Butler, which employs more than 2,000 people, live in Demopolis." Charles Foreman, who is black, a retired county agricultural agent and a former member of the School Board, says flatly, "We have the best integrated schools in the state." Major Walker, a shift worker at Gulf States Paper and one of two black members of the present School Board, takes it for granted that there is "no trace of segregation" in the schools. His five children have never known anything but integrated classrooms.

Before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*, Demopolis had three schools: a white high school, a white elementary school and the all-black U.S. Jones School, which went from kindergarten through twelfth grade. In 1965, bowing to unrelenting pressure from the Federal courts, Demopolis attempted first to integrate its schools through a "freedom of choice" plan under which any student could go to any school. One black student, Charles Foreman Jr., attended the white school and graduated in 1969. A sprinkling of black children went to the white elementary school on the west side. Faculties were integrated. Robert Templin, the associate superintendent of schools, recalls that Burnquetta Johnson, the first black teacher in a predominantly white school, "had to literally walk a gauntlet of white parents" the first day she taught there. At the end of the day she sat at her desk and cried. "She could not face leaving the school building," Templin said. Johnson has now taught in Demopolis for twenty-four years and is considered by one and all "a fine teacher."

When the courts ordered a more constructive attempt at integration, Demopolis drew a line down the middle of town, creating zones for elementary-school attendance. Those east of the line would go to the formerly all-black U.S. Jones School and those west of it would go to the formerly all-white elementary school. But zoning did not work. Parents lied about where they lived in order to send their children to the formerly white school. Many people who lived on the east side of the city bought trailers, parked them on the west side and claimed them as their principal residence, although they retained their houses on the east side. Some black parents felt a loss of control when their own U.S. Jones was integrated. It was a miserable time. "It was like a totalitarian country, with neighbor spying on neighbor," recalls Templin. The Demopolis Academy opened its doors in 1970 in the old Masonic Lodge building downtown, next door to Bama Auto Parts.

The Federal courts cracked down again, and Demopolis finally went to a unitary system in 1978: one high school, one middle school (the U.S. Jones School) and one elementary school. School administrators moved their office to U.S. Jones. "We wanted to say, 'We're here. It's safe,'" says Templin. Still, there were problems. "White parents said, 'We can't take our children to the east side,'" says Templin. "We said, 'We're not in the busing business. You have to get your child here.'" Hugh Lloyd, the Demopolis lawyer who represented the School Board during the seventeen years of litigation, said, "We thought the smaller children needed to be closer to home. Some children had to walk two or three miles, and in some places there were no curbs and no sidewalks and lots of sloughs and bridges."

The Demopolis education system was under supervision for more than a decade, with a Federal court monitoring racial percentages in enrollment and faculty assignments. When the supervision finally ended, in 1983, Lloyd says it



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was a non-event in town. Now the cheerleading squads are integrated, as is the basketball team, which was once all black. The student council at the high school was integrated from the start. But at least one hurdle remains: The high school sponsors an official, integrated senior prom, which goes largely unattended; instead, the black and white communities hold separate dances for seniors.

The Demopolis schools are full of vitality these days, with educational programs broadening and students piling onto school buses for field trips to the Marshall Space Center in Huntsville, to the Shakespeare theater in Montgomery and to Sea Lab, near Mobile.

You have only to visit Linden, a few miles away, to appreciate the Demopolis accomplishment. The entrance corridor to the school administrative offices is forbiddingly dark and full of peeling paint and missing floor tiles. Nine hundred students attend the Linden schools, about one-quarter of them white and three-quarters of them black, a woeful imbalance in a town of 2,700 people, only 38 percent of them black. "The schools here are at rock bottom," says Jean Sutton, who with her husband, Goodloe Sutton, runs *The Democrat-Reporter*, the local newspaper. Not surprisingly, the all-white Marengo Academy in Linden is thriving and is regarded as one of the better private schools in the state.

How is it that Demopolis has succeeded so well at public-school integration while Linden and so many other small towns in the Deep South have failed? No one is quite sure. Ask parents in Demopolis and they are often surprised to find that the town is unusual. Ask the local leaders and they say only that there was an unspoken consensus on the part of the old-time residents to maintain the public schools. There were no meetings, no pep talks, was no articulated philosophy. A couple of factors undeniably helped. The Demopolis system is only citywide, concentrated in a small area, not a far-flung county system; in the past the city's prominent families watched it closely and involved themselves in it. The town's even ratio of blacks to whites also helped the process, which might not have ended so happily if there had been four black children to every one white child.

"It just shows that the people in Linden could have made it work if they had tried," I said to one Alabamian close to the Demopolis story.

"The people *everywhere* could have made it work if they had tried," she said. □

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Pistols

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

I gave her my sister's name and address, then waited for the sales pitch.

"We'll send it right out to you," Diane said and hung up.

Diane is Diane Pero, communications coordinator for the LadySmith program. When I called using my own name to interview her for this story, she said that she supplies "technical information" about LadySmith only when the caller specifically asks about guns. I asked. She talked about things like "spring action" and "perceived recoil." She told me she is five foot one, weighs 105 pounds and has shot everything from a .22 caliber weapon to a .44 magnum. She said the LadySmith is the most comfortable handgun ever made for a woman. She offered to send me more information on the gun, as well as a list of dealers, instructors and practice ranges.

Michael Shypula, director of advertising and promotion at S&W, says that all signs indicate a vast audience of women just waiting for the word on how to obtain and use handguns: "Our Gallup studies show there are 15.6 million potential LadySmith owners: women who have shown interest in making a handgun purchase in the next three years. About 60 percent of them would be first-time buyers. They range from 25 to 40 years old. Seventy percent are professionals with a combined household median income of $55,000. These women want information. They don't know where to get instruction. Right now, we're spending a lot of money and not selling anything. The LadySmith program is educational. With our assistance you may decide a home security system is a better idea for you. But if we educate someone who *is* interested in handguns, we think they'll buy *our* handguns."

The problem, from Shypula's perspective, is that the press is not a willing party to such "education." *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Self*, *Woman's Day*, *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *McCalls'* and *Working Mother* have turned down the Smith & Wesson ads, some after having initially accepted them because of their ostensibly educational pitch for unarmed self-help. Only *Ladies' Home Journal* and more specialized publications like *Executive Female*, *Real Estate Today* and *Women's Sports & Fitness* have signed on. Shypula says he will look at cable TV and radio once he researches broadcast policy on firearms advertising, and he may try direct mail.

Whether American women can be "educated" into buying violence to combat violence remains an open question, though. The 137-year-old Massachusetts-based firearms manufacturer is banking on the fact that more than 12 million women already own guns. About 90 percent of them use their weapons for "home and personal protection," the rest for target shooting. But according to S&W question-

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of Ms., *is the author of six books, including* Family Politics *and* Among Friends *(both McGraw-Hill).*

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naires returned by 6,000 recent handgun purchasers, and focus groups of female "shooters and nonshooters," most women are not happy with the ergonomics or biotechnology of standard gun design. They don't like using heavy, oversized weapons built for the grip and strength of the average man. So S&W made a gun for girls.

Years ago, Lionel, the Amtrak of toy railroading, decided to pitch its product to the second sex in the hope of enlarging its market share. Instead of simply altering the packaging to eliminate father-son illustrations, and running ads that showed girls playing with model trains, Lionel made a pink locomotive and tried to sell it with cutesy, "feminine" commercials. It was derailed in its first season.

Smith & Wesson's marketers are not making the same mistake. While unambiguously aiming for the female consumer, they are careful not to trivialize either the product or the purchaser. On the contrary, they are arming women with deadly seriousness, as if it was high noon at the gender gap.

The LadySmith is neither pink nor cute; it looks like the sort of weapon you'd find tucked into the boot of a Mississippi riverboat gambler, but it is designed for the average woman's grip. The company calls it "compact and lightweight, yet powerful and tough." The five-shot revolver comes with either a two-inch barrel (rosewood handle) or three-inch barrel (Goncalo Alves wood grip), and in two models: glossy blue carbon steel ($386 suggested retail) or frosted stainless steel ($415), each with a fitted carrying case.

In S&W's brochure, the gun is not placed in a seamy setting. It is shown in elegant surroundings, near a mink coat, gloves, a scarf, a rose, a silver-framed portrait of a little girl, and a full-page picture of a woman tucking the child into bed—images that simultaneously evoke upscale power and female vulnerability, reminding women that even having it all doesn't keep you safe. (Not incidentally, everyone pictured is white.) The absence of men suggests both the growing demographic reality of single mothers' lives and a subliminal equation: He won't protect you but LadySmith will. You can't get a man with a gun, but with a gun you don't need one.

The brochure's text drives home the point: "Independence. . . . As more women have entered the job market, become heads of households, purchased their own homes, they've taken on a whole new set of responsibilities. For their own decisions. For their own lives. For their own—and their families'—security."

Shypula explains the company's approach this way: "We're not trying to prey upon women's fears. We're just responding to their interest. We're not advocating that every woman should have a gun. We can't make that decision for you. A gun is an absolute last resort for self-protection."

The LadySmith and other guns designed expressly for women may also be the industry's last resort for improving sales. Since 1982 overall gun production is down and sales have dropped 30 percent, yet over the same period the number of woman gun owners has increased by at least 2 million. S&W's ad campaign accompanied the biggest push into the women's market that the industry has seen, somewhat undercutting the company's claim that its advertising is intended as a public service.

"Smith & Wesson are very savvy people," says Andrea Kaplan, spokeswoman for *McCalls'* and *Working Mother*, which canceled their ad orders after realizing that calls to the "800" number could lead to the sale of handguns. "They know that if they put their product in the ad, no publisher would have accepted it. They understand the volatile nature of their advertising. Why else would they have created a safety message rather than selling handguns outright?"

When I first heard about the LadySmith revolver, my reaction surprised me. I'm for gun control and nonviolent conflict resolution, yet suddenly I imagined every woman armed, powerful and instantly equalized—not as an aggressor but as a confident defender of her safety and physical integrity. Wait until some guy attacks us on an empty street: POW—one less pervert; BANG—another rapist blown away. And instead of four women being killed by their batterers every day in the United States, pistol-packin' mamas will fight back: ZAP—victims no more.

Eventually, these fantasies were eclipsed by more likely scenarios, typical of what happens to people who own guns, including men.

They shoot a lover or spouse in the heat of a quarrel, or are shot themselves.

They are overwhelmed by a stronger assailant who turns the gun against them.

Their child finds the gun and thinks it is a toy.

They hear noises, panic, forget all safety instructions and shoot someone who is not an intruder.

They overreact and shoot someone who could have been verbally restrained or pacified.

They shoot when they could have chosen to escape.

They shoot and harm an innocent bystander.

Their gun discharges accidentally, or misfires.

They get depressed and shoot themselves. (People who try suicide with guns are more likely to succeed than those who use other means. In the United States more women than men attempt suicide, but fewer women than men actually succeed, perhaps because at present fewer women have access to guns.)

A classic law of the theater is instructive: When a weapon pops up in the script, you can be pretty sure someone eventually is going to get hurt. The same is true on life's stage. Guns are trouble. As threatening as the world can be, and as much as each harassed and beleaguered woman might be tempted to take matters into her own hands, the presence of firearms is known to up the ante on the hostility in any confrontation. Defending guns for women on the grounds of feminine vulnerability, self-protective responsibility or trainability leads down a slippery slope. Children too are vulnerable and menaced and abused. Should Smith & Wesson design guns for kids and let the National Rifle Association instruct them too?

Fantasies of female power and revenge may be seductive, but the answer to the escalating climate of violence in America is not to arm women but to disarm men. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Commissars' Command

PHILIP GREEN

MANUFACTURING CONSENT: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. *By Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. Pantheon. 412 pp. $24.95. Paper $14.95.*

I don't think that Noam Chomsky would like to be called a national resource, good anarchist and internationalist that he is; but he is certainly a major scholarly resource. Not to have read his essays in *Towards a New Cold War*, or *At War With Asia*, or *For Reasons of State*, or *The Culture of Terrorism*, or (with Edward S. Herman) *The Political Economy of Human Rights* and *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* is to court genuine ignorance. And the lies and misrepresentations Chomsky hasn't exposed, Edward Herman has, either by himself (*The Real Terror Network*), with Chomsky or with Frank Brodhead (*Demonstration Elections* and *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection*).

This time Herman and Chomsky have collaborated on a slightly different venture: an attempt to show definitively that the free press, at least in the United States, is freely a lapdog; that the American public is fed disinformation about the American empire and its activities not randomly but systematically. They call this a "propaganda model" of the mass media, in opposition to the argument of mainstream social science that the media in a democracy largely follow rather than create public opinion. After all, there are no commissars of information or cultural affairs in a democracy. Then how is it, Herman and Chomsky ask, that the major American mass media manage so often to produce accounts of the world that are largely indistinguishable from what a commissar would have commanded?

The propaganda model is their answer. It "suggests a systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage based on serviceability to important domestic interests." Dichotomization is used to refer both to choices of story and to volume and quality of coverage: "choices for publicity and suppression" are "comprehensible in terms of system advantage," and "modes of handling favored and inconvenient materials (placement, tone, context, fullness of treatment) differ in ways that serve political ends." As they are careful to point out, theirs is not a model of totalitarian control, and it is not disproven by the fact that they themselves use the American media for much of their source material. When elites fall out over policy issues alternative versions of "the facts" become available, and even during periods of elite consensus, "slippage" occurs. The propaganda model is a model of limits, pressures and overall emphasis.

The bulk of *Manufacturing Consent* is intended as a test of the model in action, though the word "test" must be used carefully. Herman and Chomsky have not chosen their subject matter at random; rather, they have selected for analysis events that have been targets of intensive government propaganda campaigns, and that are thus prime suspects for dichotomized treatment (if there is in fact such a thing). That is a wholly defensible procedure, so long as we view the results as a protocol for further research rather than as the rigorous "proof" of a hypothesis. Thus, they compare major media coverage of a demonstration election in El Salvador, which is treated seriously, with a serious election in El Salvador, which is treated demonstratively. In a chapter titled "Worthy and Unworthy Victims" they compare, *inter alia*, coverage of the murder of a Polish priest, Jerzy Popieluszko, with that of the killing of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero and other "religious victims" of the American-supported right in Central America. The American media's reception of the shabby disinformation campaign about "the plot to kill the Pope" has no dichotomized counterpart (though we are persuasively asked to speculate on how the American media would have reacted to such implausible nonsense "in a Moscow setting"); rather, Herman and Chomsky convincingly demonstrate that "the view actually employed by the media from beginning to end was a 'U.S. government view,' as suggested by a propaganda model." A chapter on the Vietnam War examines a case that poses "the most severe challenge to our model, namely [that] put forth by critics as demonstrating that the media have gone too far in their exuberant independence and challenge to authority." On the contrary, they show, the coverage of the Tet offensive and of the Paris peace treaty of 1973 both "demonstrate the subordination of the media to the requirements of the state propaganda system"; and in a critically important appendix, they demolish the "stab-in-the-back" thesis about the reporting of Tet put out by Peter Braestrup in his *Big Story*. A final example of dichotomization contrasts the "fantasy" about "the 'silencing' of the international media and governments by the left during the Pol Pot era" with "the real silence over comparable atrocities in Timor at the same time."

The chapters do not all work equally well. In the case of Vietnam, especially, Herman and Chomsky are let down somewhat by their naïve view that the factual record speaks for itself; though their analysis of the record is impeccable, and badly needed, they seem not to grasp that the U.S. case in Vietnam has an alleged moral and geopolitical justification independent of "facts" about who invaded whom first and similar questions. And as for Cambodia, I wish that Chomsky would drop it for good. He is caught in his own quagmire of accusation and counteraccusation concerning who said what about the scope of the genocide there. There is no doubt that the vicious attacks on him by William Shawcross and others are without merit but, again, facts don't simply speak for themselves, and Chomsky sounds too much like a man desperately arguing his own case. He would do better now to heed Yeats's advice: "Amid a place of stone/Be secret and exult/Because of all things known/That is most difficult." Overall, though, *Manufacturing Consent* succeeds both as brilliant set pieces of reportage, and as a devastating indictment of the "free press."

The propaganda model itself delineates various types of constraints on newspeople that Chomsky and Herman call "news filters." These filters are both structural and ideological. Structurally, of course, "the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orienta-

Philip Green is Sophia Smith Professor of Government at Smith College and the author of Retrieving Democracy: In Search of Civic Equality *(Roman and Allenheld).*

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tion of the dominant mass-media firms," together with the historical development of advertising as their primary income source, necessarily define "mass media" (i.e., those capable of reaching millions every day) as central institutions of corporate capitalism. Since reporters and news gatherers are—and for the most part must be, if they wish to be securely successful—no more than employees of the media giants, and since only governments and other corporate giants can systematically afford to provide "news" in an easily usable form, individual behavior is chiefly determined according to the simple workings of rational choice in a free market. In any event, the powerful did not get where they are by being inattentive, and the media market is therefore not really free; it is what Herman and Chomsky call a "guided market." This "guidance" comes from employers and from the governments on which all depend for their continued "freedom"; it also comes indirectly from other "filters." These include the need of reporters and news gatherers to rely on information provided by governments, business and especially the "experts" funded and approved by them; the subvention by big business of an industry for producing "flak"—in the form of organized letter-writing campaigns and pressures from media "watchdog" organizations—as a means of disciplining media employees; and, at the ideological level, the careful cultivation of anti-Communism "as a national religion and control mechanism."

None of these "filters" is unheard of, of course, thanks to the efforts of such critics of the media as Herbert Schiller, Michael Parenti, Alexander Cockburn, Ben Bagdikian and others; no *Nation* reader would be surprised by that list. What is original is Herman and Chomsky's particular focus on the links between structure, behavior and output: the way in which they conjoin an explanation of why news people might be expected to behave as though they were participants in a propaganda campaign with a demonstration that they actually have behaved in this fashion.

The propaganda model enables Herman and Chomsky to put some other theories of mass media news reporting in proper perspective as well. Chief of these is the right-wing accusation of "liberal" bias, in which conservatives have invested so much that it has become a commonplace of casual conversation—even though that view seems to come to us from some alternate universe in which for the past dozen years Ted Koppel, Ben Bradlee, A.M. Rosenthal and the rest have been fawning on Jimmy Carter and savaging Reagan and Bush. Why have "liberal" reporters been the handmaidens of conservative politics? Herman and Chomsky's framework enables us to see that deducing the prospective behavior of reporters from their personal political views is a completely misbegotten enterprise, like presenting evidence that members of the SS had been less anti-Semitic than the average German and proposing therefore to reinvestigate the history of what the SS actually *did*. Any discussion of news people's behavior that neglects the simple facts of their employment, and the powers and interests of those who employ them, is beside the point. Most of the time they don't need to be censored, because they censor themselves: Only a fool bites the hand that feeds him. Moreover, what the critics of "liberal bias" have never grasped is that liberalism in America operates, as Herman and Chomsky (and Parenti before them) note, within the overall control mechanism of anti-Communism. It's a rare and strong-willed reporter who, given the choice between patriotism and "disloyalty," will publicly opt for the latter, even were that choice to be permitted.

In this light a certain limitation is revealed in the institutional analysis of serious media analysts such as Herbert Gans and Gaye Tuchman, who emphasize the professional and technical conventions within which reporters operate. The very definition of who comes to be seen as a professionally reputable news source, or what is a "neutral" camera angle, is set by the media structure of gigantic scale, amassed wealth and dependence on the state. Though reporters may in practice be ideologically neutral (a much more plausible charge than that of their alleged liberalism), their conventions are not. Moreover, sociological analyses tend to examine the typical, the ordinary, the normal. Herman and Chomsky, by focusing on a few atypical instances, enable us to see how the professionalism described so well by Gans simply disappears when the stakes are really high.

Beyond these structural considerations, Herman and Chomsky's conception of "filters" shows us something else about the relationship between liberalism, professionalism and reportorial behavior. Above I have discussed the right-wing

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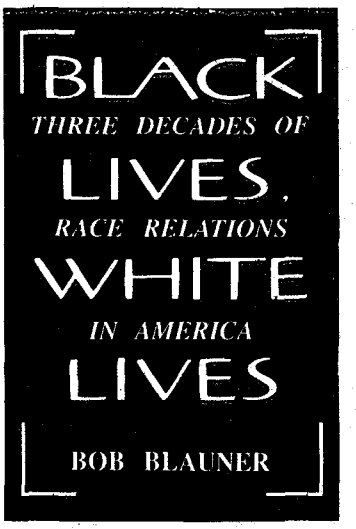

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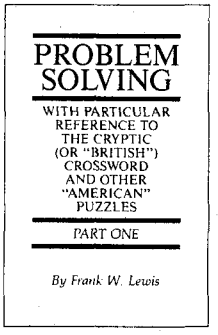
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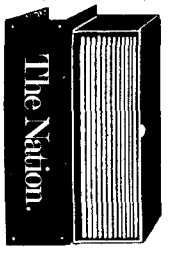

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conspiracy theory as though it is an instance of paranoia, or at best of methodological incompetence. But what Herman and Chomsky call "flak" is, as they spell out, an *enforcement mechanism*; and the liberal bias canard is at the center of it. Producers and reporters of news are not disciplined by a random outflow of letters and calls from offended citizens, but by a highly organized, multimillion-dollar enterprise orchestrated from within the corporate community and encompassing such institutions as the American Legal Foundation, the Capital Legal Foundation, the Media Institute, the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and Accuracy in Media (AIM). Reed Irvine and his colleagues are not bad social scientists; they are hired guns, and they've been hired by persons who have the financial resources and structural access to dominate the field of media criticism as well. As John Oakes, Sidney Schanberg, Daniel Schorr, Dan Rather and many other lesser lights can testify, "enforcement" is not metaphorical. Can Reed Irvine or Robert Lichter or Pat Buchanan give us the name of the last reporter or commentator who was penalized by a major news enterprise for being too conservative?

The propaganda model, together with the case studies which both generate and sustain it, constitutes a major intellectual intervention. At the moment, though, it promises more than it delivers. For although their foregrounding of the structural economic filters (concentrated ownership, class interest and the effects of advertising) suggests that they are about to produce a theory of capitalist media, Herman and Chomsky have not done so. Instead, they have produced a theory of the Leviathan national state: Their real antecedents lie not in Marx but in Hobbes. As Chomsky is an anarchist, that is certainly fitting, and is itself a worthy enterprise. However, though the concentration of ownership and sheer scale of the mass media market certainly facilitates the centralization of news sourcing and thus governmental manipulation, they're not essential to it, as the Soviet press can testify; the class-power element in all this almost seems tacked on as an afterthought, for Herman and Chomsky do not describe any class conflicts at all. Their interest in events occurring within the nation-state is desultory, as is their consideration of the phenomenon of nationalism itself. That the state fosters popular nationalism is unquestionable; that this activity *accounts for* nationalism's strength is doubtful. It may be that nationalism is an expectable byproduct of the mere existence of the modern nation-state and the mass society that is one of its expressions, in combination with uneven economic development and a competitive global economy. Britain, for instance, is an example of a capitalist economy in which a less acquiescent mass media and a more readily expressed popular resistance were overwhelmed by the ideological demands of the state during the ridiculous Falklands war. Did media oligopoly and the government's propaganda campaign have anything to do with this? Of course; but how much is the question Herman and Chomsky can't fully answer within their framework.

A satisfactory model of capitalist media behavior, then, requires both a class-conflict test and a deeper theory of consciousness formation. With respect to the latter, Herman and Chomsky's implicit romanticism about popular consciousness, their apparent assumption that there is a real, pre-manipulated consciousness out there if only we could free it from its constraints, will probably always prevent them from probing as deeply into the nature of that "filter" as they ought. But this is less of a limitation in the analysis of domestic as opposed to overseas newsmaking. We would all be in their debt if (following Michael Parenti's *Inventing Reality* and, in a British context, the work of the Glasgow University Media Group) they would now turn their attentions to such tests of their model as the comparative coverage of Polish miners' strikes and American miners' strikes, competing analyses of the sources of inflation, genetic versus cultural theories of social behavior and so on.

Of course others should be doing this work too; we don't all have to invent our personal research models, and for most current purposes Herman and Chomsky's will do just fine. I often wonder how Chomsky goes on year after year, producing work alone or in collaboration that is never promoted, never honored, never treated with much more than condescension, at best, in the establishment press or the scholarly reviews, never even recognized at all by talk-show television; never having his refutations of the lies of *New York Times* reporters, television newsreaders and "scholarly" apologists for American foreign policy even noticed. Perhaps he is satisfied knowing that thousands of professors around the United States think no serious discussion of American policies and

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political conflicts in the Mideast, or Southeast Asia, or Indonesia, or Central America, and certainly no discussion of "terrorism" at all, is possible without fundamental reference to his work. An equally valuable tribute would be general adoption by media critics of the Herman/Chomsky propaganda model. □

Nature Playing

DINITIA SMITH

GEEK LOVE. *By Katherine Dunn. Alfred A. Knopf. 348 pp. $18.95.*

In June 1987 it was announced that Sonny Mehta, the new president and editor of Alfred A. Knopf, had bought as his first acquisition a novel called *Geek Love.* A story about a family of freaks, the book was written by a relatively unknown Oregon author named Katherine Dunn. The publishing industry waited with interest to see what the novel would reveal about Mehta's taste and sensibility. This spring the book has finally appeared, packaged in a brilliant orange and dark blue jacket, the title set in striking, jagged type. But to those who look closely, there is something strange about the cover. The little borzoi dog, the Knopf trademark for seventy-four years, is deformed; it has five legs instead of the usual four. An inside joke, and an omen of things to come.

Reviewers received a matching folder containing advance reviews of the novel and a press kit describing Dunn. *Kirkus Reviews* praised *Geek Love*'s "wit and poetry," and *Publishers Weekly* called the book "brilliant, suspenseful, heartbreaking." The press kit related the unusual life story of the author, who is a boxing correspondent for the Associated Press. The child of migrant workers and a chronic runaway, she has even done a brief stint in jail for passing a bad check. Of such material are the myths of literary lives spun.

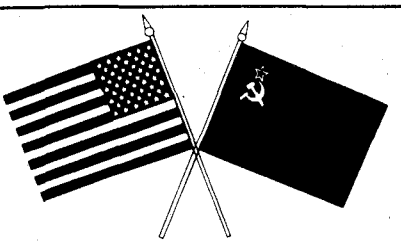
Geek Love is the story of the Binewski family, a band of traveling freaks. There is Olympia, a hunchbacked albino dwarf; Arturo, born with flippers instead of arms and legs; Iphigenia and Electra, Siamese twins; and Fortunato, normal-bodied but gifted with telekinetic powers. Their parents, Al and Lil, have deliberately made malformed children by feeding drugs, insecticides and radioisotopes to Lil during her pregnancies. The Binewskis' motive is money. By exhibiting their children as freaks, the Binewskis can support them, and their efforts are, according to the novel's narrator, a tribute to their "Yankee . . . self-determination and independence."

The novel's narrator is the Binewskis' daughter, Olympia, who weaves together two stories. One, which takes place in Olympia's childhood, tells of the rise of the Binewski family and the transformation of Arturo, the Aqua Boy, as he is known, into the leader of a cult in which people mutilate themselves, cutting off first fingers, then whole limbs, in an effort to find happiness. The second story is of the adult Olympia's attempt to rescue Miranda, her daughter—by incestuous telekinetic insemination from Arty via Fortunato—from the predations of a sadistic lesbian, Miss Lick, who wants to cut off the vestigial tail at the base of Miranda's spine.

Filling out these stories are a series of mutilation scenes. The novel begins with the mother, Crystal Lil, biting off the heads of chickens in the traveling sideshow. She "sipped! Absolutely sipped at the wriggling guts!" writes Dunn. Later, a horse's legs are amputated and it is left to stumble around in the dust; a man's face is blown off; a mother is murdered in front of her children. Most of the mutilation involves the bodies of women, for *Geek Love* is, above all, a book of female self-loathing. Miss Lick, the rich lesbian, "hates beautiful female children" and pays women to have operations, which she records on videotape. One woman has all her hair burned off while doctors and nurses stand back and watch "as the girl shrieked in fear if not pain." Miss Lick pays another woman to have a double mastectomy, and a young girl to have her face etched with acid. "I like Miss Lick," says Olympia, after she has viewed some of Miss Lick's videotapes.

To the narrator, women "trail their sex like slug slime." In one episode Dunn has Olympia, the hunchbacked dwarf, dance naked in front of a crowd of leering men, exposing her "ragged dugs and their grey nipples." Another scene shows Lil trying to have sex with her dead husband's corpse. "She settles herself over his limp penis . . . rubbing her crotch

Dinitia Smith's second novel, Remember This, *has just been published by Henry Holt. She is a contributing editor of* New York *magazine.*



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against him," Dunn writes.

Buried somewhere in this orgy of sadism and humiliation is a nascent gift for language. The novel has a promising beginning: a father telling a story to his children, "my dreamlets," as he calls them, "sitting with full bellies in the lamp glow," gathered all around him as the rain falls with a "hiss and tick on the metal of our big living van." In the publisher's press kit, Dunn reveals that she studied her Anglo-Saxon and Latin roots for years. But sometimes her verbs are so refined that you trip over them as you try to get on with the story. "Freaks are like owls, mythed into blinking, bloodless objectivity," says the largely uneducated Arturo—unbelievably—at one point in the book.

And the narrative voice is off here. Olympia's observations of her daughter Miranda (who doesn't know Olympia is her mother) are those of a man or a lover, not a mother. Olympia feels Miranda's "heat" beat "through the inch of air between us." She allows Miranda to sketch her while she is naked. Miranda is seen by Olympia through a haze of prizefighter slang and cheap male clichés. Watching Miranda perform naked in a burlesque house for freaks, Olympia thinks of men wanting to "grab her ass and pump jizz into her."

Certainly freaks and dwarfs have been put to imaginative use in literature before, in Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, for instance, and in Stanley Elkin's *The Franchiser*, where they assume a vivid, moral force. The jacket copy of *Geek Love* compares the book to *Frankenstein*. But whoever wrote the jacket copy hasn't read *Frankenstein* lately. *Frankenstein* is the story of a Promethean attempt to create a being superior to anything seen in nature before. "A new species would bless me," says Victor Frankenstein. "Many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me." It is, of course, an experiment that goes terribly wrong. But in *Geek Love*, when Lil gives birth to Fortunato, an apparently normal child, she tries to abandon him. And we're supposed to sympathize.

There is a great novel still to be written about the freaks who inhabited the traveling sideshows of the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. There the deformed, nature's forgotten, could earn a living by exhibiting themselves and so stay out of the asylums where they might otherwise have died. Freaks then were not regarded as sick but as *lusus naturae*—jokes of nature, or nature playing—until the medical establishment became interested in their plight, doctors began to write papers about them and campaigned to have them institutionalized. Unlike Dunn's characters, and perhaps more interestingly, those freaks often presented themselves as souls of middle-class respectability.

But *Geek Love* seems designed merely to horrify us with a series of set pieces, each one more revolting than the last. This is the kind of writing that has its origin in John Irving's *The World According to Garp*—women cutting out their tongues, children maimed or killed, all rendered in heightened language, evoking shock—a cheaper, easier emotion than true empathy. *Geek Love* is a snuff film made legitimate by a reputable publishing house. □

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Less Brains, Better Legs

GEORGE PACKER

A THEFT. *By Saul Bellow. Penguin. 109 pp. $6.95.*

Saul Bellow describes his latest protagonist as "a raw-boned American woman. She had very good legs—who knows what you would have seen if pioneer women had worn shorter skirts. She bought her clothes in the best shops and was knowledgeable about cosmetics. Nevertheless the backcountry look never left her. She came from the sticks; there could be no mistake about that. Her people? Indiana and Illinois farmers and small-town businessmen who were very religious."

In fact, it would be easy to mistake Clara Velde of *A Theft* for one of Bellow's male, Jewish, city-bred heroes, possessed of the unmistakable voice that Gabriel Josipovici has described as the utmost formality mixed with the utmost desperation. Clara seems less a high-fashion executive or Bible-fed hick—Bellow claims she is both—than an Augie March or Moses Herzog or Charlie Citrine with slightly less brains but better legs. She plays the questing, self-analyzing, mouth-flapping role that stands at the center of nearly all Bellow's work, without which there would be no story at all. But it does not seem accidental that she is a woman.

Clara's energetic, discontented Park Avenue life comes undone when an engagement ring is stolen. The emerald was given to her years ago, under duress, by Ithiel Regler, a "big, *big* picture" type in Washington who has penetrated the depths of the twentieth century but proved incapable of marrying the woman who loves him most. After four bad marriages, Clara still hasn't gotten over him. When the ring disappears, neither a private detective, her psychiatrist, her confidante Laura Wong, her work, nor Regler himself (with whom she maintains a close friendship) can save Clara. The source of the novella's quick-paced tension is not the mystery of the ring's theft and return but of Clara's frantic reaction and ultimate self-discovery. For the ring "was involved with her very grip on existence." It represents not just her undying passion for Regler but her vision of herself as a coherent individual; and at the center of the vision is love.

Clara Velde has a less sophisticated predecessor in another recent Bellow heroine, Katrina Goliger, from his extraordinary novella *What Kind of Day Did You Have?*, found in the collection *Him With His Foot in His Mouth*. Both women, in middle age, are under the kind of pressure that is always constricting the chests of Bellow's male protagonists. For the women, though, the pressure comes from loving the sort of men these have become.

Much-scolded as a misogynist, Bellow has typically drawn his female characters as either man-eating ex-wives or "potato-love" sexpots. The shift toward a sympathetic female point of view answers the spiritual and sexual defeats of his intellectually muscular males, last represented by Uncle Benn in *More Die of Heartbreak*, who fled marital and Western decline to the far tundra—"Even that was not remote enough." In

George Packer's The Village of Waiting *was published last year by Random House.*

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eternal pursuit of the problem of the individual in the modern world, Clara's Ithiel Regler and Katrina's Victor Wulpy have no interest left in *real* personal life; great thinkers, they are on the road out of existence as individuals. At one point Clara puts this to herself with true clarity:

> You couldn't separate love from being. You could Be, even though you were alone. But in that case, you loved only yourself. If so, everybody else was a phantom, and then world politics was a shadow play. Therefore she, Clara, was the only key to politics that Ithiel was likely to find.

It's up to a woman, then—this woman—to continue the Bellovian struggle of worrying about being human and rescuing oneself from the swarming threats to humanness, which in Clara's case are cynicism, despair, psychoanalytic abstraction and the menace of New York City in the form of an offstage Haitian thief. Clara doesn't buy "the collapsing culture bit" that preoccupies Ithiel Regler and has preoccupied the novels of Bellow at least since *Mr. Sammler's Planet*: "I'm beginning to see it instead as the conduct of life without input from your soul. Essential parts of people getting mislaid or crowded out—don't ask me for specifics; I can't give them."

The problem with *A Theft* is the specifics. Characteristically, most of it is talk, but the world outside the talk seems sketchy at best, the story is in a peculiar hurry to end. This lack of a material medium deprives Bellow of his brilliant way with figurative language, lessens the tension inherent in each scene and disembodies his characters, leaving sheer voice. Clara's Austrian au pair, who secures the return of the ring from her boyfriend, the Haitian thief, is indistinguishable from the story's New Yorkers, saying things like, "The day of the fashion show we had lunch, and you made a remark like 'Nobody is anybody.' You were just muttering, talking about your psychiatrist. But when you started to talk about the man in Washington just now, there was no nobody-anybody problem." The au pair has come to New York to perfect her English. Obviously, landing in a Bellow novella is the right method.

In the end, this girl, impulsive, deep-feeling and wise like Clara, returns Clara to herself, and in an unexpected twist gives Clara reason to have hope for her troubled daughter as well. The epiphany of the last page ("The main source of tears came open. . . . I do seem to have an idea who it is that's at the middle of me") depends on all of these connections and losses and finds making emotional sense. They don't, but in Bellow's case that never destroys a book. He is still up to so much along the way—more, in his 70s, than nearly anyone else, and against every trend away from ideas in fiction—that even a lesser work like *A Theft* is worth a slow, careful read. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Little Vera
How to Get Ahead in Advertising
Miss Firecracker
Field of Dreams

Orson Welles once predicted that a film might someday change the world—though it wouldn't necessarily be a *good* film. He did not foresee that the movie itself might prove unnecessary.

Such is the case with *Little Vera*, the first Soviet film to be promoted in *Playboy*. Following in the tradition of Marilyn, Jayne and Mamie van Doren, Natalya Negoda now makes her appearance on the newsstands and in the sock drawers of America. Even as I write, an arc of erotic energy is rising from our continent, jetting over a Great Circle Route to descend on Moscow in a pacific haze. I interrupt that healing flow only to bring the harmless, incidental news that *Little Vera* is actually pretty good.

Rough-edged, alert and frequently very funny, the film is the work of director Vasily Pichul, writer Maria Khmelik and an excellent cast headed by Negoda, whose talents go well beyond her willingness to spread *glasnost*. Already 50 million Soviet citizens have seen *Little Vera*, according to the American distributor. No doubt the film's two brief nude scenes account for part of that success; though they might seem negligible in America, where *Playboy* gives better value for your money, the scenes must be a real provocation in the Motherland. But they are only a small part of the film's challenges, which turn out to involve even the choice of location.

Set in Soviet Ukraine, in an industrial landscape full of smokestacks, rail yards and docks, *Little Vera* takes place in a city named for the postwar era's chief censor of the arts, Zhdanov. There, in an apartment you can all but smell, lives Vera. Her parents harbor illusions that

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she might go to college, but that seems unlikely, unless they've started giving lessons in hair streaking, gum chewing and staring into space. Vera labors as a telephone operator but works only at hanging out, usually with the sort of people who get a cold eye from the cops. She's among them at an open-air disco, complete with gang fights and bad rock music, when she meets Sergei (Andrei Sokolov).

He looks like the star of *Alexander Nevsky*, Nikolai Cherkassov, trying to imitate James Dean. No sooner have he and Vera exchanged their first cigarette than they retire to his pit of a dormitory, to make love beneath AIDS posters warning against casual sex. By this point, even the slowest-witted viewer will have gathered that these young people qualify for the label of hooligans. But it also should be obvious that Vera and Sergei, for all their disaffection, are thoroughly, astonishingly innocent. "Do you love me?" Vera asks, rising from his bed. "Of course," Sergei replies. And, for the rest of the film, they stick to their word.

To a degree that is remarkable in any feature film, Soviet or otherwise, *Little Vera* refuses to schematize its characters. Vera's father is a hopeless alcoholic, but he also holds his job steadfastly and truly loves his children. The mother is tired and bitter, but she still contrives a lavish luncheon for Vera and Sergei, at which she performs with relentless optimism. Vera's brother, a doctor who lives in Moscow, is a pompous, arrogant, pill-pushing young twit who nevertheless makes the long trip to Zhdanov whenever his family needs him. These are all people who have managed to make a mess of their lives, as people often will; and the film does not blame them for it. It follows closely and sympathetically instead, putting the viewer into the middle of this disorderly family while allowing enough distance for the audience to think, and to laugh.

Shot with frequent recourse to a handheld camera, which stays on top of the actors yet doesn't seem to crowd them, *Little Vera* is full of improvisatory moments and small gestures that turn out to be just right. When the police break up a fight at the disco, you see one of them smile for just a moment as he shoves a young man into the van. When Vera's father is in his cups late at night, his drink of choice turns out to be not Soviet vodka but Beefeater's gin. A delicate negotiation between Vera and her mother is interrupted when the brother casually walks into the scene; oblivious, he stands between the two women, yawning, then playfully clamps a clothespin onto Vera's sleeve before exiting. A dressmaking session with Vera and her best friend turns into a combination drinking binge, crying jag and yoga demonstration; a visit to police headquarters, where Vera has to give a deposition, turns into a painfully funny exercise in bureaucratic slapstick. If there is a lesson to be learned from all this, political or moral, then it has escaped me. All I got from the film was the pleasure of seeing the crowded, irrational, sweaty texture of the characters' lives.

And that's why Andrei Zhdanov, in his time, would have made the filmmakers fear for their lives. Few figures in the history of the arts have so richly deserved to be pissed on; and I am happy to think that the persecutor of Akhmatova and Shostakovich, however he turns in his grave, must now be getting wet from *Little Vera*. It's a fine enough irony that his name will be linked forever with that of the first Soviet citizen to pose naked for an American girlie magazine. But, better than that, the city of Zhdanov is the scene of the following exchange.

"Do you have a goal in life?" Sergei asks Vera, as the two lie entwined on a beach. "We have a common goal," she replies solemnly: "Communism." With those words, played for laughs before 50 million Soviet citizens, the world indeed changed.

Meanwhile, back in the NATO countries, filmmakers continue to blare messages at their audiences. *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*, Bruce Robinson's comedic fable about guilt, redemption and salesmanship, may be a forgivable case though since it is both uncommonly literate and angry. At first glance, the film recalls *Network* in the frequency and volume of its tirades. Its superiority lies partly in its conversion of the message into a nightmare of special effects and partly in the way Robinson turns the harangues against their mouthpiece. When Bagley (the virtuosic Richard E. Grant), a London ad man, rebels against his profession, he little understands that his rebellion itself must take the form of advertising.

Having long been a bundle of frayed nerves and ready explanations, Bagley has recently been working himself into a nervous breakdown, trying to think of a new way to sell pimple cream. Nothing comes to him. His head is as empty as the cream is useless, and so he has been reduced to locking himself in his office, where he acts out a whole repertory of TV pitches, one after the other, in a hopeless search for the solution. There's something sinister in the attempt, since Bagley seems to have no identity except

AU PREMIER COUP

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so indelibly that when
the smell of popcorn, say, or
a phrase from Grieg wafts across
the room, you see a mother
standing at a bathinette,
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in three neat stacks, white
as blossoms. It's a quarter
of a century ago, and more.
You're young as the cherry tree
outside the opalescent window.
In your dreams, you sit in its branches,
looking through the glass
at yourself, bathing the child.
Framed like that, you're held,
the picture's surface
opaque, no underpainting
showing through. Someone
shakes an aluminum pot
in the kitchen. The sounds
of popping corn are grace
notes falling through the evening air.

Susan Ludvigson

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the guises of his TV commercials: As he improvises campaigns, he switches almost without transition from a Rambo figure gunning down pimples with massive firepower to a glamorous young research scientist who just *knows* the stuff works, because "I made it *myself*." Bagley is so good at jumping from one selling role to another that you have to wonder if any single person actually lives in his thin, malleable body.

And so he snaps. Feeling guilty about his craft—which itself involves the creation of feelings of guilt in the population at large—Bagley seeks redemption through a lunatic crusade to warn humanity against his kind. He will quit his job, expose all the lies and save the world. But even as a rebel, Bagley remains a salesman. When his wife, Julia (Rachel Ward), discovers him in the bathroom at dawn with the remains of household products splattered on the walls, the ceiling and his own naked body, he explains he's merely "isolating pockets of genuine worth" as the preliminary step in his effort. "I'll explain properly," he promises, "and you *will* understand."

Julia understands that she'd better phone a doctor. Not only has Bagley made a mess of the house, but he's become obsessed with a large pimple that's developed on his neck. She assumes the nastily pulsating growth has appeared because Bagley is worn down; his fear of it, she thinks, merely expresses his feelings about the pimple cream campaign. But the audience knows what Julia cannot—the pimple is alive. It has literally come to a head and now can talk, smoke a cigarette, leer at women. Out of the ranting protagonist of *Network*, an *Alien* has emerged.

The head, Bagley's second self, is both the success and failure of *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*. It creates a success in terms of special effects—as a lurid, uproarious creation of Animatronics—and also in its performance. The head gets some of the film's best lines. It signals a failure by closing off the terms of the film's argument. Even more, it makes a mockery of Bagley's preaching and thus saves the film from some of the tendentiousness of *Network*. But the head also dramatizes the notion that you simply can't escape the domination of television and its corporate drivel. All you can do, the film seems to suggest, is curse God and die. If that sounds like an overstatement, then consider the conclusion of *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*: Bagley, freed of his conscience, delivers a messianic address on the glories of new and improved products while the sun streams from behind his Christlike figure and the strains of "Jerusalem" well up on the soundtrack.

Well, all right, I liked that part. I also marveled at Richard E. Grant's performance, which is nearly as good a foray into multiple personalities as Jeremy Irons's work in *Dead Ringers*. But, for all its determination to go over the top, *How to Get Ahead in Advertising* resembles an inflated short story. Granted, it doesn't feel at all long, but neither does it leave you feeling entirely satisfied—which makes it seem disconcertingly like a cleverly conceived, brilliantly executed TV commercial.

One of the reasons I go to movies is to avoid America's bright young playwrights. Hearing them crank up their dialogue machines to produce something like the speech of us ordinary folks, only more, you know, *poetic*, is enough to send me crashing up the aisle, praying for the destruction of Yale, Juilliard and the entire city of Louisville. Recently, though, even the movies have provided no refuge. First there was *Jacknife*. Supposedly, the characters are drunk all the time because of the war in Vietnam, but it seems more likely they're drowning the sorrow of having to speak Stephen Metcalfe's dialogue. Now comes *Miss Firecracker*, the sort of film in which one character suddenly erupts in terrible, hacking spasms, and his interlocutor, with a straight face, says, "You still got that cough?"

Yet, for all the evidence that it began as a play, *Miss Firecracker* lets the time go by pleasantly enough, mostly because of its cast. Holly Hunter repeats her role from the original production of Beth Henley's *The Miss Firecracker Contest* as the waif who wants to be in Yazoo City's annual beauty pageant. Long known as the town tramp, she now thinks she can redeem her reputation by going to church regularly, taking an orphan to lunch or the movies once a week and competing for the title of Miss Firecracker during the Independence Day festivities. She's meant to be endearing—rather like Shirley Temple, grown slightly taller and with her hair dyed red—which ought to be the kiss of death. Through a force of will that equals the character's, though, Hunter makes the role more than habitable. No doubt her most memorable scene, the one that rightfully earned her such a high reputation on the New York stage,

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is her contribution to the talent competition of the Miss Firecracker pageant: a patriotic tap dance routine that is so earnest, so energetic, so inept, that you're almost ashamed to laugh at it. But there's an even better moment earlier in the film, when Hunter learns she's been chosen as a finalist. The news arrives just when she's all but given in to despair; she's been in the bathroom, preparing to scrub the dye out of her hair. When she hears the good news, she's drenched, gasping, wide-eyed, speechless—not like Shirley Temple at all, but rather like a shivering little primate. At that moment, Hunter gives you the impression of being stripped naked.

It's hard to compete with a performance like that; but Mary Steenburgen, as the cousin who remains Yazoo City's most celebrated Miss Firecracker, almost succeeds in stealing the focus. A living cartoon version of the Southern belle, she seems to have developed prehensile lips, speaking all her lines as if cooing at a baby. Tim Robbins, as Steenburgen's half-mad, ne'er-do-well brother, throws himself into his job with the same abandon he did in *Bull Durham*, though his role here isn't half as rich. The prize for most selfless performance goes to Alfre Woodard, though. Her face hidden behind thick eyeglasses, her body turned into a shapeless lump, she lets herself become a figure of fun in the marginally racist role of a crackbrained seamstress. That she emerges as a fully sympathetic character—almost human, in fact—is more to her credit, and the direction of Thomas Schlamme, than that of the script.

Ultimately an exercise in transforming Southern Gothic into Southern Sentimental, *Miss Firecracker* gives its actors ample room to be silly, dumb and occasionally touching, which is good news. The bad news is that Beth Henley wants to leave you feeling uplifted. Your best bet is to sneak out five minutes before the inspirational conclusion.

The Soviets find courage to look at themselves in *Little Vera*; we Americans watch the inoffensively heartwarming *Miss Firecracker*, or, far worse, Phil Alden Robinson's *Field of Dreams*. Based on the novel *Shoeless Joe* by W.P. Kinsella, *Field of Dreams* celebrates fatherhood, baseball, the First Amendment, kindly old doctors and Iowa. It gives wish-fulfillment a bad name.

Ray (Kevin Costner), the son of a one-time minor-league ballplayer, studied at Berkeley in the 1960s, married cute (to Amy Madigan) and now lives on a farm. The lucky fellow is thus perfectly situated to receive the message of the film. God, or somebody, tells him to build a baseball diamond amid the cornfields, so that the legendary Shoeless Joe Jackson can return to life and play America's own game once again. The voice from beyond also directs Ray to find Terence Mann (James Earl Jones), the greatest writer of the 1960s, who is now sunk in post-Nixonian despair.

It's always wonderful to watch Jones act, but it's a bittersweet pleasure here, seeing him mouth pieties about the redemptive power of baseball. I remember him in a much better sports film—*The Greatest*, a biography of Muhammad Ali—as he turned himself into the living, fire-breathing reincarnation of Malcolm X. Here, he has to smile at the resurrection of two dozen white guys from the pre-Jackie Robinson days, while not a single Negro League player takes the field. As for Costner, he surely must have longed to throw in a few of his lines from *Bull Durham*. They would have been enough to melt the soundtrack.

Field of Dreams is so phony that Ray puts nightlights on his diamond. □

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EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 650*)

need for abortion. Point one is free contraception and sex education, as well as free prenatal care and health care for children. That's certainly nice. But contraception, free and easily accessible or not, doesn't always work, so that even its universal practice will not spell the end of unwanted pregnancy. Nor, as the Children's Defense Fund's admirable work with pregnant teen-agers has made clear, will young people necessarily use contraception when it's available.

Of course society should provide prenatal, nutritional and health care for children, as Christopher suggests, but that doesn't begin to touch the expense of raising children. A survey by the Guttmacher Institute found that the most common reason women gave for having an abortion was that they were unable to afford a child. If society really wanted to assure that anyone could afford to have a child, or another child, we'd need guaranteed jobs, generous parental leave, affordable housing, highly subsidized child care and first-rate public education. But even in Sweden, with sex education, contraceptives available and social benefits far more complete than Christopher advocates, the abortion rate is 18 percent of pregnancies among women of reproductive age.

The second point in Christopher's program has "society" offer the option of free abortion to women in cases of rape or incest, or when the mother's "mental or physical health is threatened." This is where I came in; that's the exact wording of the loophole in the statutes that outlawed abortion in the bad old days. Here Christopher is willing to admit that "not all taking of life is murder." This is an interesting place to draw the line. I have always drawn it where the Supreme Court did in *Roe v. Wade*—when a fetus is mature enough that it could survive outside its mother's body there should be no abortion. But Christopher seems to be saying that abortion is O.K. when women have been forced into pregnancy by rape or incest; when the pregnancy results from accident or mistake, abortion is murder. The unspoken argument seems to be: If a woman chooses to have sex and gets pregnant, she has to have the baby.

And so we come to "society's" final proposal, a national adoption service. Dan Quayle might have suggested this if he had the wit. "Adoption, not abortion" is a slogan that assumes either that pregnancy and birth are passing inconveniences or that nine months of an unwanted pregnancy followed by giving up a child is what you get if you want to have sex. And as Katha Pollitt pointed out in these pages on October 17, 1988, the supply of unwanted babies who will be born once abortion is crimin—excuse me, is defined as a social problem, will

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far outstrip the demand for them. Nor will adoption help the mother of several children who does not have the financial resources or the energy to raise another one.

Christopher claims that he wants to "end the dialogue of the deaf between those who shout 'murder' and those who dully reply 'no problem.'" This formulation is dishonest, because "no problem" is not the feminist position. Christopher's notion of feminism is Gloria Steinem circa 1967, but he seems wholly ignorant of the work of pro-choice socialist feminists like the members of the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse, or of the writing of Rosalind Petchesky and others (see the reading list, page 650). I cannot believe that Christopher would argue that the black struggle for civil rights, or the unions' defense of their members, stems from a possessive individualism that has encouraged the right wing. That he can make that claim about feminists and their allies shows, I think, that he does not take feminism seriously as a movement that seeks to transform society—and that he has not made an effort to understand it.

Finally, I am curious about the timing of Christopher's column. His opposition to abortion has been known for years. Yet he waited to air his views in *The Nation* until the increasingly conservative Supreme Court was about to hear *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, a case that may indeed limit severely, if not revoke, the right to a legal abortion. Christopher takes this moment to magisterially inform the left how to think about abortion—allying himself, whatever his intentions, with the right-to-life movement he so eloquently denounces.

Elsa Dixler

FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE

Washington

Michael Dukakis had one good moment in his otherwise pitiful presidential campaign. That was when he in effect asked George Bush whether he considered women who had abortions to be murderers. Bush hemmed and hawed, but his advisers quickly realized that labeling such women in this way could send one-fifth of the adult female population to prison. In effect, Bush was told to deny that his antiabortion stance implied that killing a fetus was equivalent to murder.

We recount this episode because it suggests a fundamental point that Christopher Hitchens seems to have missed in his antiabortion essay. There already is a moral and legal consensus in this country that eliminating a fetus is fundamentally different from killing a human being.

Hitchens's essay implies that a life-form becomes human after conception because—presumably—that is when the brain and uniquely human attributes begin to develop. In fact, science now allows us to fertilize the egg outside the womb. That is what in vitro fertilization is all about, and why thousands of women who can't conceive in the old-fashioned way have been able to have children. Doctors doing in vitro fertilization routinely take more than one egg from the woman and fertilize all of them. One fertilized egg is implanted in the woman and the rest are discarded. Does Hitchens regard this as the taking of human life? Does he think a fertilized egg about to be implanted by a doctor in a woman's womb deserves the description "unborn child"? Would he join with his antiabortion comrades, chief among them the Catholic Church, in condemning this procedure and in the process condemning thousands of people to childlessness? Is this position likely to be too reactionary even for Hitchens's antiabortion zeal? Nevertheless, this is where positions like Hitchens's ultimately lead us.

It amazes us that while Hitchens allies himself with the reactionaries who would deny women the right to control their own bodies, he can still consider himself progressive. Maybe Hitchens can live with the principles he outlined in his essay, but he shouldn't be allowed to forget that if he and other antiabortion advocates have their way women will be dying because of them.

John Willoughby
Mary Ann Fay

BOYS' CLUB

New York City

I'm writing for information on how to start my own chapter of the Men Who Know More About Reproduction and the Evils of Abortion Than Most Women Seem to Know Club, started at *The Village Voice* by Nat Hentoff and expanded to your pages by the erstwhile progressive Christopher Hitchens. While criticizing everything else about their politics and intelligence, Hitchens makes the daring insight that the emotions of working-class women who are horrified by abortion are truer than those felt by the selfish, "Me Decade" women who turn a blind eye to the atrocity that they daily commit without a second thought. It's finally become clear that one of the few who can truly claim to stand squarely between the unintelligent emotionalism of the right and the murderous disingenuousness of the left is Hitchens himself. And not only does he understand the issue with a clarity that has escaped the millions of women who have attempted to grapple with it but he has even presented us with a *program* that finally solves the seemingly intractable difficulties that may have led us down the errant path to abortion, but need to no more.

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equality and world peace that we've no doubt been missing all along.

Bravo, Hitchens! Thousands of years of patriarchy can't have been all wrong!

Frank Sheed

'SAME OLD STORY'

Montague, Mass.

Christopher Hitchens's "Minority Report" on abortion comes at a bad time, given that abortion for all women, whatever their circumstances, is now under threat by Reagan's Supreme Court. But his combination of sexual utopianism with a total banishing of women as *members* of society would be bad news under any regime. What kind of political imagination argues that society ("we") can make a serious proposal to women (obviously "them") whereby women give up abortion in return for sex education, contraception and adoption organized according to the principles of the masculine "we" explaining true values to women in this article? By 1990 women may not have abortion to give up. So what kind of yes or no does Hitchens imagine as their response? The answer: He doesn't imagine women responding or acting in any way. An unborn child is more real to him than a woman who doesn't want to be pregnant and give birth.

Why is a fetus so much more visible as a suffering being than a woman who carries through an involuntary pregnancy? What does Hitchens think adoption consists of: the delivery of a baby carried for nine months and given birth to by no one? Perhaps it's time for a new strategy for defenders of abortion: the representation of state-enforced pregnancy as involuntary servitude. That's what it is, and a form of peculiarly invasive servitude. Black women in this country were used as breeding machines by white masters throughout our centuries of slavery. Now Hitchens wants to extend this privilege to women of all colors.

And he tells us that resisting such exploitation of women's bodies and energies is "'Me Decade' possessive individualism." Come on! Abortion is much older than that. For over a century it's been at the heart of feminist movements that recognized women's reproductive control as even more basic to their freedom than economic opportunity. One result of legalization in the past decade has been the expansion of decent clinics where abortions are performed on embryos, not fetuses. If Hitchens is so up on embryology, he ought to know the difference. And if he's so up on materialist politics, he ought to know that distant dreams—an enlightened, efficient and pro-woman National Health Service in an increasingly reactionary late-capitalist state—are no basis for the kind of bargain he wants to make: women's bodies and labor (in both senses) as counters in men's grand designs. This is not "a historic compromise." It's the same old story.

Ann Rosalind Jones

HANDS OFF!

New York City

Gee, Mr. Hitchens, what a great bunch of brand new ideas you had in your "Minority Report." I can't imagine why the rest of us never thought of nationally available free contraception and sexual and contraceptive education in schools. It's a sure bet that these two measures would cause a sharp decline in unwanted pregnancies, and thus a decline in the necessity for abortions. We should really get moving on these ideas; I'm sure we'll be able to implement them before women lose their rights to safe, legal abortion. And if we can't get the country to go social overnight, well, I guess hundreds of thousands of women will die from botched, illegal abortions. But, oh, I'm sorry, you've heard that all before and it's starting to get on your nerves.

You say "no woman may be compelled to bear a child if she is the victim of rape or incest, or if her mental or physical health is threatened." I love that bit, I really do. Thanks so much for telling me when I will and will not be COMPELLED to give birth. And, since you're so smart, you can have the fancy job of deciding when a woman's mental health is threatened by being pregnant. You could sit on a very tall chair and give the thumbs up or thumbs down and I'll be shuffled off to the Abortion Wing or the Prenatal Care Wing.

You seem to think that "possessive individualism" is a fad, that women insisting on control over their own reproductive systems is a fad. I wonder, what do you think happened in the early 1970s? Do you think a bunch of women got together and said, "We feel like having some abortions. Now, what excuse can we use? Oh, how about, 'I should be able to do whatever I want with my body'? Yeah, that's a good one. Grab some posters. Let's go."

So, now we should get together again and think up a new slogan, something more eighties-ish? No, Mr. Hitchens, I don't think so. We really meant it then and we really mean it now. There is something timeless in my desire for you to keep *your* hands off *my* body.

Maryan Newbury

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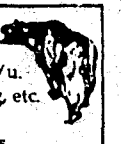

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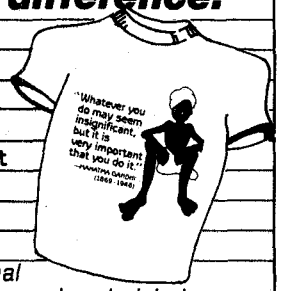

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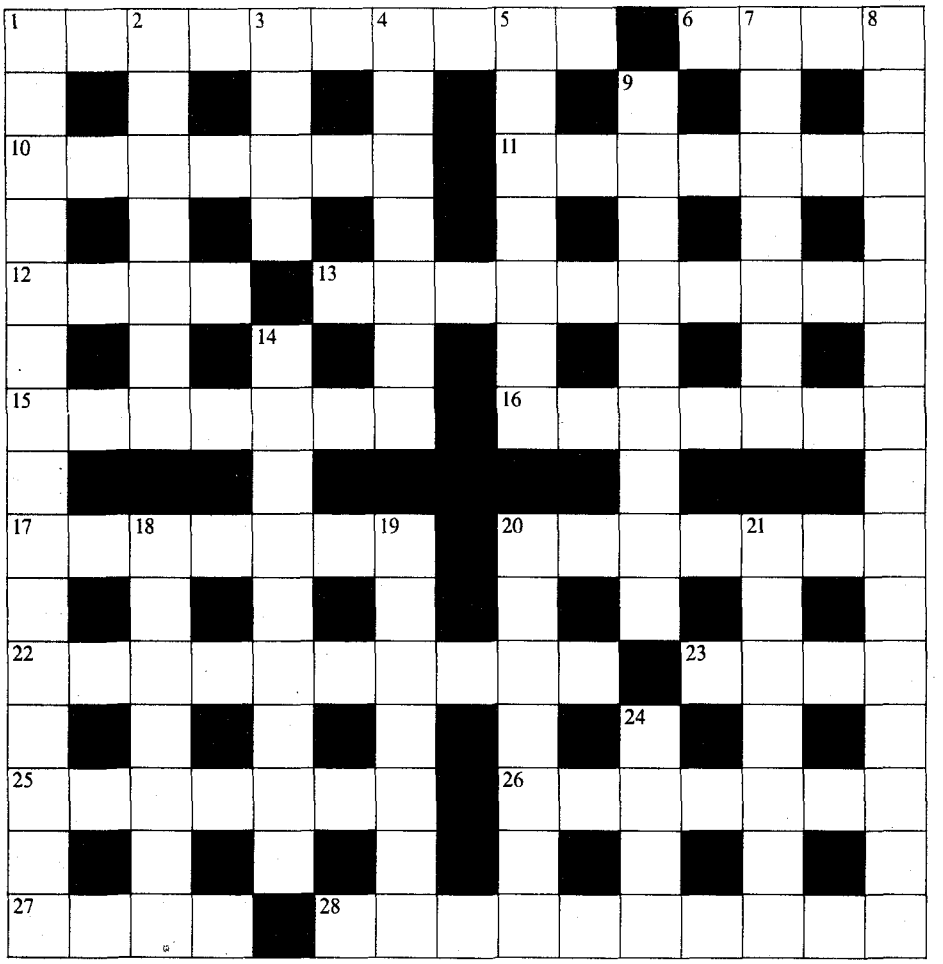

ACROSS

1 Nothing is 8 down if this modern philosphical acceptance is true. (4,2,4)
6 Totaled taxis that didn't fight for the union? (4)
10 There's a bit of a traitor in near confusion, as one can tell. (7)
11 and 12 In cahoots with what seems to be turning over nothing in the courts. (4,2,5)
13 Gets paid, in a way, while you have to expand around it, to bring something into disrepair. (10)
15 Giving specific authority by putting on certain clothes? (7)
16 Tell a tale, as they say, at a magical place that must come to a conclusion for the philosopher. (7)
17 Where one writes prescriptions, possibly. (7)
20 Not so much in the place where you sleep as it is relatively sanctified. (7)
22 Two Shakespearean kings, responsible for more than one funny 23. (6,4)
23 A person's calling? It might well be on this, if a message is intended. (4)
25 Upset the bus, and I find an Arab leader there. (3,4)
26 Being a female worker can be hard! (7)
27 and 28 What a well-matched couple does, obviously, as they board the train for Niagara Falls. (4,2,8)

DOWN

1 Pine obviously growing over certain countries of royal tradition, with hail which might be typical there. (4,4,3,4)
2 It's the cut of the vest, sir! (Works, obviously!) (7)
3 In the country, is one hurried? (4)
4 Having a session to see me get in, possibly? (7)
5 Raises the temperature once more, since she comes up rather objectively with food, commonly. (7)
7 Fashionable, since it's reputedly windy. (7)
8 Does it describe the flashy spender at Las Vegas, ultimately? (6,3,6)
9 Undid around six of the French type, being more or less united. (9)
14 Dismiss someone with only a short interruption to the work, which might be useful when told to go to blazes. (9)
18 Make obeisance to a piece of wood, which may tie things up. (3,4)
19 Perhaps the sultan gets a boy in trouble, as the church might consider it. (7)
20 Hurray! It's about time! (But it's a pretentious display!) (7)
21 Chaps in trouble with green stuff, which not everyone likes, according to the cartoon. (7)
24 There's nothing like it in musical comedy! (Made to order, however.) (4)

PUZZLE BOOK

Book 5 of "*The Nation*'s Best Puzzles" is available for $5.50. Send your check or money order to: E.S. Lewis, 32 Pembroke Avenue, Acushnet, MA 02743.

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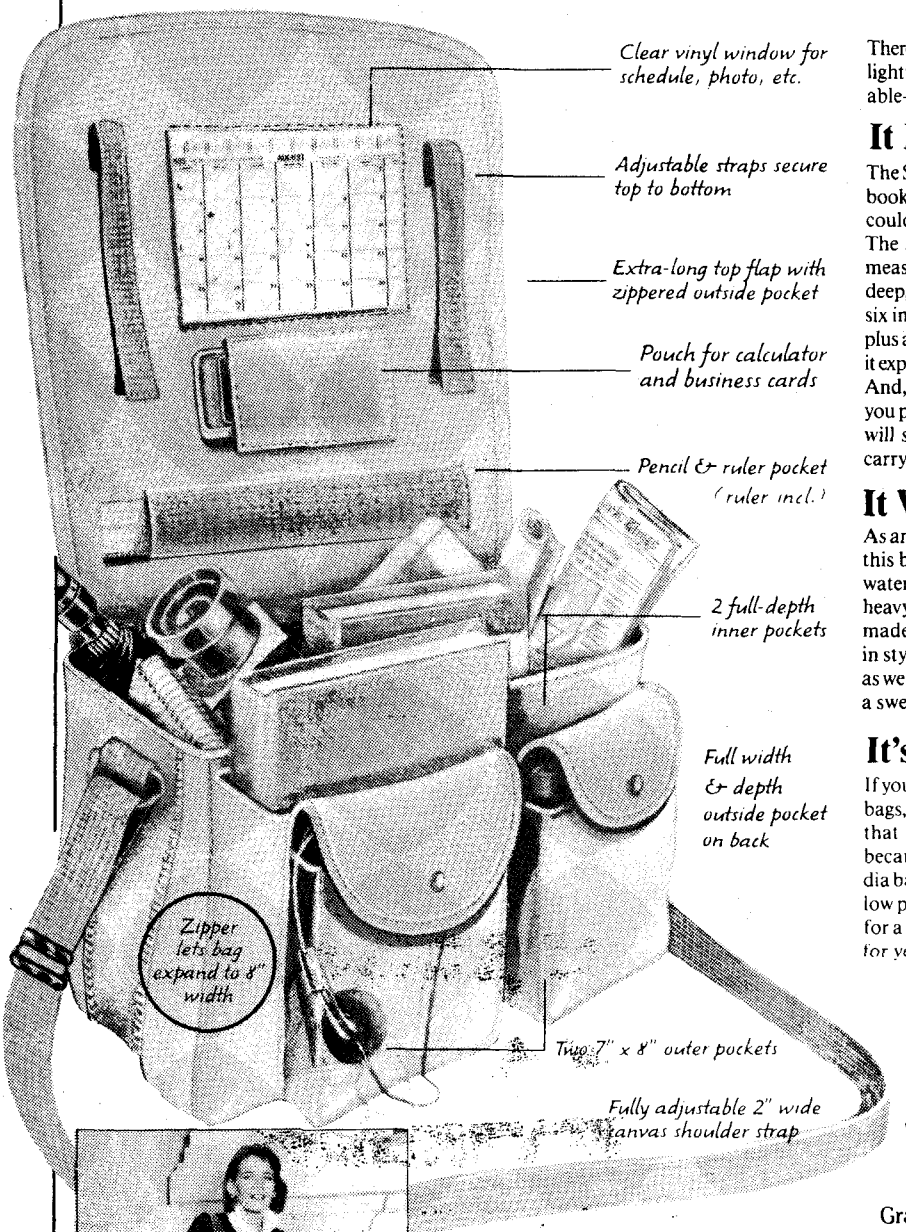
SCANDIA: The Shoulder Bag That Has It All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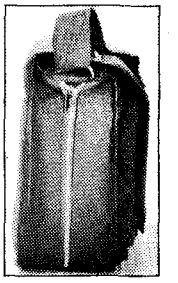
2 full-depth inner pockets
Full width & depth outside pocket on back
Zipper lets bag expand to 8" width
Two 7" x 8" outer pockets
Fully adjustable 2" wide canvas shoulder strap

The Scandia will stay in style for years; its handsome, casual look goes as well with a business suit as it does with jeans and a sweater.

There's simply no other shoulder bag that's as roomy, lightweight, versatile, stylish, durable—and affordable—as the Scandia.

It Holds Everything . . .

The Scandia is intelligently designed to hold all the books, paper, equipment, clothes, and sundries you could ever need to carry.



The sturdy canvas Scandia measures 15½" across, 11" deep, and 4" wide, and has six inner and outer pockets, plus an inside zipper that lets it expand to a full 8" in width. And, no matter how much you pack into the Scandia, it will still be trim enough to carry comfortably.

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As anyone who's ever owned a Scandia will testify, this bag lasts for years. Its high-quality canvas is water-resistant, color-fast, and scuff-proof. The heavy duty zippers, piping, and snaps are also well-made and very durable. And the Scandia will stay in style for years; its handsome, casual look goes as well with a business suit as it does with jeans and a sweater.

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